

*The Last  
Empress  
of the  
French*

*Philip, W.  
Sergeant*





LIBRARY

THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CALIFORNIA  
SANTA BARBARA

PRESENTED BY

Mrs. MacKinley Helm



Handwritten signature or initials.



THE LAST EMPRESS  
OF THE FRENCH .



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation







# THE LAST EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH

BEING THE LIFE OF THE EMPRESS  
EUGÉNIE, WIFE OF NAPOLEON III.

BY PHILIP W.  
SERGEANT, B.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE COURT-  
SHIPS OF CATHERINE THE  
GREAT," Etc.

*ILLUSTRATED*

PHILADELPHIA

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

LONDON: T. WERNER LAURIE







## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE <i>(From the painting by Winterhalter)</i> . . . . .	Frontispiece
THE COUNTESS OF MONTIJO . . . . .	<i>facing page 21</i>
NAPOLEON AND EUGÉNIE . . . . .	" 63
NAPOLEON III. . . . .	" 85
PRINCE NAPOLEON . . . . .	" 117
THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . .	" 159
THE PRINCE IMPERIAL . . . . .	" 179
THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . .	" 235
COUNTS WALEWSKI AND MORNAY . . . . .	" 269
THE EMPEROR, EMPRESS, AND PRINCE IMPERIAL AT CHISLEHURST . . . . .	" 383
NAPOLEON AT WILHELMSHÖHE . . . . .	" 385
CAMDEN PLACE, CHISLEHURST <i>(From a photo by W. J. Roberts)</i> . . . . .	" 387
THE EMPRESS IN LATER LIFE . . . . .	" 397
FARNBOROUGH HILL . . . . .	" 401



CHILDHOOD IN SPAIN  
AND FRANCE





## CHAPTER I

### CHILDHOOD IN SPAIN AND FRANCE

THE attempt is often made by the biographer of famous people to gather from the circumstances of their birth, or from the conditions of their families before it, something which may be treated as a premonition of the eminence which they were destined afterwards to attain. With regard to her who is known to history as the Empress Eugénie, it would certainly require much unprofitable ingenuity to show what there was to lead to her rise from the position of younger daughter of a poor Spanish nobleman and his half-Scottish wife to that of consort of the Emperor of the French. Some points in her character and certain facial traits have been connected, rather fancifully perhaps, with her sudden appearance in the world. But in the preceding story of her parents and in her own early life there is little indeed to draw the promise of a crown even from the legendary gipsy, who is declared in the present instance, as always, to have prophesied the girl's elevation to royal rank. Those who look for extraordinary results from a mixture of strangely diverse races may

4     The Last Empress of the French claim the Empress Eugénie's case in support of their theories. For instance, it has been said that her various strains of blood made her a very chameleon for taking colour from the background against which she stood. But such theorising, after all, is of the kind, easily gratifying its author, which ignores the mass of instances and sums up the exceptions into a rule.

On the fifth anniversary of the death of Napoleon Bonaparte at Saint Helena, the 5th May 1826, an earthquake disturbed the city of Granada, in Southern Spain. At the time of the occurrence a lady was sitting in the garden of her husband's house in the Calle de Gracia. The shock brought about the premature birth of the child whom she was expecting; and thus came into the world one who was to sit beside Napoleon's successor in the interrupted history of the French Imperial throne. For a large portion of her early years this child was known simply as Eugenia Palafox, but in her baptismal register she appears as Maria Eugenia Ignacia Augustina, daughter of Don Cipriano Guzman Palafox y Portocarrero, Count of Teba, and of his wife, Maria Manuela Kirkpatrick y Grevigné.

As the evidence of her parents' names shows, the future Empress of the French was of curiously mixed race. The family of Palafox was of Aragonian origin. In the middle of the eigh-

## Childhood in Spain and France 5

teenth century Don Philip, the second son of the head of the family, married Dona Francisca de Sales Portocarrero y Zuniga, who among her many titles bore that of sixth Countess of Montijo. This lady was connected with some of the greatest houses in Spain, a fact of which genealogists of the Second French Empire did not fail afterwards to make much show. Owing to the Spanish custom of transmission of titles through the female as well as the male line, the descendants of Don Philip and his wife possessed a remarkable string of honourable names. The two sons Eugenio and Cipriano (Eugenio Eulalio Portocarrero y Palafox and Cipriano Guzman Palafox y Portocarrero) were Counts respectively of Montijo and of Teba and were Grandees of Spain several times over. In the Portocarrero surname they showed a strain of Italian blood, the Portocarreros being said to have come from Genoa to Spain in the fourteenth century; otherwise they were thoroughly Spanish.

On the other hand, the Spanish element in the family with which Don Cipriano intermarried was but recent and comparatively small. Considerable attention has been paid by biographers to the Scottish side of the Empress Eugénie's ancestry, so that it is perhaps unnecessary to dwell on it at length here. The genealogy of the family of Kirkpatrick of Closeburn, privately printed in 1858, and much drawn upon by

## 6 The Last Empress of the French

subsequent writers on the subject, shows a recognised historical beginning with an Ivone de Kirkpatrick early in the twelfth century; although it is claimed that the Kirkpatricks had estates in Nithsdale and Annandale four hundred years earlier, and legends referred them to Finn MacCumhaill, the Fenian King. The grandson of Ivone, bearing the same name, married a daughter of Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale and Cleveland, grandfather of the Scottish King. About 1484, after the gift by James III. of the estate of Kirkmichael, Dumfriesshire, to Alexander Kirkpatrick, the junior branch which he represented called themselves Kirkpatricks of Kirkmichael in contradistinction to those of Closeburn, the elder branch. The circumstances which led to the connection between the Kirkpatricks and Spain arose from the civil troubles in Britian under the Stuarts. The family were loyalists. Sir Thomas, of the Closeburn line, remained in Scotland after the flight of James II. and VII., but refused an earldom offered to him by William of Orange. The younger Kirkpatricks were more actively hostile to the invader, and the brothers George and Robert, great-great-grandsons of Alexander, took refuge in Ireland, where the former settled and founded the Irish family of Kirkpatrick. Robert followed Prince Charles Stuart and paid the penalty for this when he was beheaded in 1746. He left a

## Childhood in Spain and France 7

young son William, who grew up to marry a Miss Wilson and to be the father of a numerous family, one of whom, named after him, went to Spain in the eighteenth century and settled in Malaga. He joined a wine and fruit business there and married the daughter of the head of the firm, another merchant settler, Henri de Grevigné, who had come from Liège and had taken as wife a Spanish lady, Francisca de Gallegros. It was this union of Scottish and Walloon-Spanish strains that was to mingle with the almost purely Spanish blood of Don Cipriano Palafox in the veins of his daughter.

William Kirkpatrick made for himself a good position in Malaga, where in 1791 he was appointed consul to represent the United States. He sent his three daughters to Paris to be educated, and it was there that the youngest, Maria Manuela, was said first to have met the man whom she afterwards married. In the troubled state of Spanish affairs in the early part of last century, the sons of Don Philip de Palafox found themselves on different sides. The Count of Montijo was a patriot, at a period when it was an ungrateful task indeed to be a patriot. He attempted in vain to stir up the worthless rulers of Spain and at one time had actually in his power King Carlos, his queen, and the royal favourite Godoy, at the Aranjuez

## 8 The Last Empress of the French

Palace. He had, however, but few who would follow him, was unable to arouse his sovereigns to action, and consequently, in the words of M. Filon, biographer of Prosper Mérimée, "Eugenio de Montijo was looked upon as a fool because he failed where, had he succeeded, he would have been a hero." He fought against the French, but with little advantage to himself. His brother Cipriano, on the other hand, was a worshipper of Napoleon and an *afrancesado*. At Salamanca he lost an eye and broke a leg on behalf of France; again at Buttes-Chaumont, in 1814, he was wounded, receiving a French decoration in reward for his services. It was about this time that he may have first seen Maria Manuela Kirkpatrick in Paris, where she was living at the house of Matthieu de Lesseps, who married her mother's sister. The girl had been in the French capital for a large part of her life, not only for education but also because of the dangerous condition of Spain. But the second fall of Napoleon led to her return to Malaga and to her father's house. It also killed the prospects of a brilliant military career for Colonel Palafox, who returned also to Spain and settled down to garrison life in Malaga.

William Kirkpatrick, in spite of the fact that the business of exporting Spanish wines and fruit, which had now become his own, had made him rich, is said to have continued to use a room

## Childhood in Spain and France 9

at the back of his premises for the retail sale of wine. His elder daughters being married, the youngest remained to assist him, and, being possessed of a great share of the beauty which afterwards made her daughters so famous, she was no doubt an attraction to visitors. Maria Manuela, afterwards Countess first of Teba and then of Montijo, has suffered, as will be seen later, from the attention alike of enthusiastic eulogists and of unkind critics. The former have ignored the shop, as the latter have the possibility of being virtuous in a shop. As an ambitious woman (concerning such a trait in her character there is no doubt), she found this episode in her career of the utmost importance. She was able to conquer the heart of Colonel Palafox. He was only a colonel of artillery without fortune, wearing a black patch over one eye, and he was more than a dozen years her senior. But he was Count of Teba, and his brother's nobler title and larger fortune might one day be his. Considering the after history of the pair, we can hardly hold that on the lady's part there was a love-match. On the Count's side, the match was no doubt for love. His brother was against it, while in order to gain King Ferdinand's consent to the union of so high-born a Grandee with the daughter of a foreign trader it was needful for Don Cipriano to show proof from Edinburgh of his wife's

10 The Last Empress of the French original nobility. This he was able to do<sup>1</sup> and on the 15th December 1817 the marriage was duly celebrated in Granada. Only the malice of French anti-Imperialist journalists ever disputed this. They put forward later such mutually destructive stories as that the Empress Eugénie was ten years older than she was reputed to be, that she was born three years after her legal father's death, that her parents had been divorced, and that they had never been properly married. For some of these libels against herself and her daughter the Countess of Montijo afterwards obtained judgment from the Court of First Instance of the Seine, with fines on the offenders varying from one to three thousand francs.

After the wedding at Granada Don Cipriano and his bride returned to Malaga to live. In spite of the fact that they were by no means

<sup>1</sup> In his "Kirkpatrick of Closeburn" Mr Alexander Kirkpatrick says: "When the Comte de Teba second son of the Comte de Montijo, Duke of Penaranda, etc., Grandee of the First Class, made proposal of marriage to Dona Maria Manuela Kirkpatrick, it became necessary for her father to prove that his ancestry was such as to justify a Grandee of Spain in forming the connection. He said to his proposed son-in-law, 'You trace up to King Alfonso the Eleventh; if I trace to King Robert Bruce, I suppose His Majesty will be satisfied?' He laid before the King a patent from the Heralds' Office at Edinburgh, certifying his descent paternally from the ancient Barons of Closeburn, whereupon, it is said, the King laughing exclaimed 'Let the noble Montijo marry the daughter of Fingal!'"



## Childhood in Spain and France 11

wealthy, they are said to have entertained freely in the society which was to be found in that town ; or, rather, it was the Countess who entertained, for the Count of Teba was remarkably loth to spend his money, and indeed the later discord between husband and wife arose principally over this question. The Countess lost no time in making for herself a reputation as a hostess, however her husband might grudge the expense. But her love of social success surely does not prove entire frivolity, as her censors have assumed. Beside gaining popularity by her attainments as a musician, a linguist, and an amusing talker, she impressed foreign visitors with her mental powers and was early called the most cultivated woman in Spain—perhaps not a very hard title to win in those days. That her brother-in-law remained unfriendly is hardly to be wondered at, seeing how politics had estranged him and Don Cipriano. It is more than likely that he disapproved of the way in which his brother's money was spent by the lady about whose entrance into the family he had not been consulted. He had not, however, the strength to hold out against her for many years. Although he married late in life, with the hope, it was thought, of keeping the extra titles and fortune out of his brother's way, through that very circumstance he fell before the cleverness of the Countess of Teba. After the birth of a daughter

## 12 The Last Empress of the French

Maria Francisca, in 1825, the Tebas removed from Malaga to Granada, where the elder brother resided. Manuela approached her brother-in-law through his wife with such success that, on the birth of her second daughter next year, she prevailed upon him to be godfather to the child. In this way it came about that the name of Eugenia was given to Don Cipriano's second-born.

Little has been recorded of the first years of the future Empress. Washington Irving, indeed, speaks of having "dandled her on his knee" when on a visit to Granada. But for a fortunate accident we should know little more of the succeeding years of her childhood. That accident was the meeting in 1830 of Prosper Mérimée, travelling in Spain for the first time, with the Count of Teba. The latter invited the young Frenchman to call upon him in Madrid, whither he had now moved, and there introduced him to his wife. The family, increased by the addition of a boy, who died young, was housed in the Calle del Sordo, where Mérimée became a frequent visitor. From this point began a friendship between Mérimée and the Countess and her younger daughter, which lasted until his death. Of the mother, in particular, he was a most enthusiastic admirer, and his correspondence with her was carried on until the end of his life. His letters to her are only

## Childhood in Spain and France 13

known to us at present by what M. Filon, who saw them, says of them in his "Mérimée et Ses Amis." Too much importance, perhaps, need not be attached to what a Mérimée writes to a beautiful woman; but in one he describes himself as "confounded by her learning." He was, at any rate, indebted to her in his work, for she gave him the story of "Carmen" and later suggested also "Don Pèdre," which he dedicated to her in 1848. Of the children Francisca and Eugenia, aged only five and four respectively, he did not, it may be presumed, see so much in these days as a few years later. A great change in the life of the family had first to come, of which the beginning was the death of Don Eugenio in 1834, leaving no issue. His brother by this not only became Count of Montijo, etc., but also inherited the bulk of the family fortune and the estates. In itself, this would not have altered matters much, for the Count clung to his ideas of domestic economy as firmly as ever. His ambitious wife, however, was relieved of restraint by other circumstances. The death of King Ferdinand in the previous year had been followed by the Carlist War. In the summer of 1834 political troubles were at their height in Spain. Massacres were taking place in the streets of Madrid itself. Moreover, a cholera epidemic was raging in the country, and the Count determined to send his family to France for safety,

## 14 The Last Empress of the French

while remaining behind himself to attend to his duties as Senator. On the 18th of July the Countess of Montijo, with Francisca, Eugenia, and Paco, her son, left Madrid. At the age of eight Eugenia first set foot, near Perpignan, in the land over which she was nineteen years afterwards to be Empress.

The break with the old life was almost complete. The Countess did not return to her husband until he was on his death-bed nearly five years later, conduct which largely gave rise to the aspersions from which she suffered so much afterwards. At no period could she claim to be a good wife, and of course she had her grounds for complaint. There was a real incompatibility of temperament between her and her husband. The Count, though his personal bravery was amply proved, and though his lineage was beyond reproach, was not perhaps quite so fine a character as was made out by his French panegyrists under the Second Empire, when his daughter was on the throne. They could look kindly on his views about domestic economy, as reminiscent of the Roman father. But parsimony is not so attractive to the wife and mother as to the philosopher. So when Don Cipriano, although he had become Count of Montijo, maintained the view that his daughters ought to be brought up as if no addition had been made to the family fortune,

## Childhood in Spain and France 15

it was only natural that the Countess should dissent and should think of the eligible matches to be made some day. Her social pretensions had long been the cause of trouble. Her husband did not care for the society which meant so much to her, and of its amusements he thought poorly. Her musical tastes were joined to a love for the theatre and for amateur acting, which he did not wish to see indulged. To her admirers she seemed eminently capable of inspiring men; she did not inspire her husband. The energy and vivacity which the former saw so prominent in her, he probably interpreted as recklessness and disregard for her reputation. In fact, except that they were both champions of the Napoleonic idea, there appears to have been nothing in common between husband and wife. It is no great cause for wonder that, circumstances driving them apart, only the approach of death brought them together again.

On her arrival in France the Countess made for Paris by way of Perpignan and Toulouse. In Paris matters were doubtless made easy for her by her acquaintances in Madrid society, and particularly by that with Mérimée; for among her first friends were the De Laborde family, who had known Mérimée from childhood. Her circle was distinctly literary in character through the influence of Count Alexandre de Laborde,

## 16 The Last Empress of the French

best known for his studies in the history of Art, Mérimée himself, and Henri Beyle, who was introduced by Mérimée and rapidly became a great favourite with the mother and the two children; since Paco was now dead. The story is very familiar of the little Eugénie and her sister sitting up late on the evenings when Beyle called and listening eagerly while he steeped them in the Napoleonic legend and told them tales of the European wars. Equally well known is that of Mérimée's lessons in French and in handwriting and of his visits with them to the confectioner's to reward the progress of his pupils. But this was not their only education. In 1837 they were both sent as boarders to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, in the Rue de Varennes, under the names of Francisca and Eugenia Palafox. Here they remained until early in 1839, when news of the serious illness of the Count of Montijo determined the Countess to return to his side. She had engaged an English governess for her daughters, in whose charge she left them, with instructions to follow her, while she hastened to Madrid. The devoted Mérimée, after seeing her off, superintended also the departure of his former pupils and Miss Flowers by coach, all promising faithfully to write to him. It is recorded that his favourite Eugénie kept her promise on the journey. They reached Madrid too late to see their father; he

## Childhood in Spain and France 17

had, indeed, though they did not know it until their arrival, died on the 15th March, two days before they started from Paris, and the Countess had barely reached Madrid in time to be present at the death-bed.





EUGÉNIE AND  
HER MOTHER







Countess of Montijo.

## CHAPTER II

### EUGÉNIE AND HER MOTHER

THE period immediately following the death of the Count of Montijo was naturally a quiet one for his wife and daughters. Eugénie was sent to school in England for a while, a fact which was duly noted in the London newspapers at the time of her marriage. Scarcely any record, however, remains of her English schooldays. They were spent in Clifton at an establishment only two doors from the "dame's school" where the future Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, then a child of about ten years old, was receiving his early education.

The Countess did not prolong unduly the season of mourning. As we know from Mérimée's letters to Mlle. Jenny Dacquin, the *inconnue* of his celebrated correspondence, when he made his second journey to Spain in 1840 he paid a visit to the widow on her estate at Carabanchel and busied himself with the amateur theatrical performances with which she entertained her guests. The fortune left to her seems to have amounted to about £4000 a year, with a house in Madrid and the estate in the country,

## 22 The Last Empress of the French

and she was thus enabled to gratify the tastes for which during her husband's lifetime she could with difficulty find scope. She took also some part in politics, to the extent, at least, that General Narvaez, one of the most prominent of the Moderate Liberal party and afterwards dictator of Spain, was numbered among the admirers who came to her *salon* in Madrid. This "ugly fat little man with a vile expression of countenance," as Lord Malmesbury describes him, was better as a friend than a foe. Ambitious and unscrupulous, when asked on his death-bed whether he forgave his enemies, he replied that he had none, for he had always got rid of them. After his death, General Prim derived comfort from the idea that now Narvaez was being tortured by all the devils. Even the friendship of Narvaez was not entirely advantageous to the Countess of Montijo. The Moderate Liberals fell from power. In the temporary triumph of the opposite party under General Espartero, which led to the retirement of Queen Cristina to France, Carabanchel offered a pleasant retreat to the Countess and her daughters from the troubles of the capital. The daughters were growing up, and the Countess, one of whose greatest delights according to her friends was match-making,<sup>1</sup> was determined that

<sup>1</sup> M. Filon in "Mérimée et Ses Amis" speaks of her "making marriages and amusing her fellow-creatures to the

her girls should make brilliant alliances. With the elder she at once achieved success. At the end of 1842 we find Mérimée writing to Mlle. Dacquín that Madame de Montijo was coming to Paris. "She comes to get her daughter's trousseau," he continues. "I do not know the future son-in-law, but I was once instrumental in having another suitor discarded. He was a poor wretch, though a Grandee several times over."

Another letter from Mérimée to the same lady, three months later, gives a slight sketch of the two sisters at this period. He tells Mlle. Dacquín that he has to see a Parisian dressmaker about costumes for the daughters of Madame de Montijo at a fancy-dress ball to which they are going at Madrid. "The elder is dark, pale, not quite so tall as you, very pretty, with a gay expression. The younger is a little taller than you, very fair, marvellously beautiful, with just that shade of hair that Titian loved." The French writer's verdict on the sisters' looks was endorsed by others, but the elder was nevertheless married long before the younger. In June 1843 the Countess arrived in Paris with her daughters, as Mérimée had announced, to day of her death." Her younger daughter was credited in after years with the same taste, and was very generally supposed to have had a hand in the union of the Princess Victoria Eugénie of Battenberg with the young King Alfonso of Spain.

24 The Last Empress of the French  
buy the trousseau, and in the following February Francisca's wedding took place in Madrid.

The story told in connection with this marriage has obtained great currency and doubtless thereby has lost nothing except its resemblance to the actual facts. It may be supposed, however, that there was some slight foundation for it. Francisca's suitor was the young Duke of Berwick and Alba, who united a British dukedom, still under sentence of attainder, with Spanish nobility. James Stuart FitzJames, eighth Duke of Berwick and fourteenth of Alba, was the descendant of one of the sons of James II. by Arabella Churchill. The third Duke of Berwick married the daughter of the Duke of Alba, and by the Spanish custom his son took that title also. The young Duke was even more a Grandee than the "poor wretch," whoever he was, whom Mérimée had succeeded in getting discarded, for he was twelve times a Grandee of the country of his ancestor's adoption. Naturally the ambitious Countess of Montijo welcomed him as a son-in-law in prospect, and encouraged his attentions as much as possible. He was said, however, to have been slow in declaring himself and so to have left it in doubt which sister he preferred. Finally, under pressure from the Countess, he proposed for the hand of the elder and was at once accepted. Francisca, going to her sister's room to tell her,



found her lying on her bed suffering from the effects of poison. She had overheard the Duke's interview with her mother, and, undeceived now as to his feelings, had attempted to kill herself. Such is the usual form of the story, which makes a serious illness follow the attempt, leaving permanent nervous effects, notably the sudden fits of depression to which the Empress was subject in after life. There was, of course, only one person who could have told what exact basis the story had. It must be remembered that the affection between the sisters remained very close up to the death of the Duchess, which was generally looked on as robbing the Empress Eugénie of the confidante of her most intimate feelings, and that the Duke and Duchess of Berwick and Alba were annual visitors to France and to the Court under the Second Empire. The prominence of Eugénie in Madrid society after Francisca's marriage, which the uncharitable have attributed to the recklessness of disappointment, is naturally enough explained by the fact that she was now the one unmarried daughter of a popular hostess. Moreover, she was her mother's child to a greater extent than the quieter and more retiring Francisca, and being seventeen was beginning to feel the pleasures of a greater freedom than she had yet enjoyed.

Not only the brilliant marriage of the elder daughter, but the course of political events also

## 26 The Last Empress of the French

contributed to give the Montijos a good position in Madrid. Espartero had fallen in 1843, and the young Queen Isabella, though only thirteen, had been declared of age. Soon after the Berwick and Alba wedding in February 1844, General Narvaez had been made head of the Government and the Queen Mother Cristina had been recalled. With the Moderate Liberals, and especially Narvaez, in power, the Countess of Montijo became a more popular entertainer than ever. The house in the Plaza del Angel was thronged with visitors, and the Countess might well have thought herself at the summit of her career. Her second daughter's remarkable beauty, of a type uncommon anywhere, was a valuable factor in her social triumph, for it drew numbers of possible suitors to the house. But, curiously, no offer appears to have come. The impertinence of history has furnished various reasons for this. Friends of the Empress maintained later that she had set her mind on marrying a Frenchman and that this accounted for her seeming capriciousness toward her countrymen. Yet, as is mentioned later, she confessed to Napoleon III. before her marriage that her heart had been touched more than once. At least three Dukes were suggested, at various times, as having so affected her, Alcanizes, Sesto, and Ossuna. Some said that a Spanish Grandee would be afraid to risk such originality

in a wife. For people at least talked of her riding in the streets of Madrid on a fiery bare-backed horse, with a cigarette in her mouth ; of her appearance in brilliant Andalusian costumes at bull-fights, with not a fan but a whip in her hand and a dagger in her belt, with red satin boots on her feet and flowers and jewels in the broad golden plaits of her hair ; of her presentation, in the rôle of Queen of Beauty, of the prize for the most successful toreador ; of her swimming feats and her fencing. Again the chroniclers have recourse to the effect on her disposition of the shock preceding her sister's marriage to explain these extravagances. Such explanation is unnecessary. Eugenia de Guzman (it was not until she began to live in Paris that she came to be called Eugénie de Montijo) was not the first woman who rode a bare-backed horse, swam, fenced, or even (if she did so) smoked. From early days she had given signs of what is known as a "tomboy" disposition, and a love of mischief persisted later in life.<sup>1</sup> The influence of her mother, herself reckless in her conduct, though in a less athletic and perhaps less innocent manner, was not of a kind to restrain the daughter's unconventionality, which can easily be understood to have created some stir among the ladies of Spain. The writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* rather under-

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* pp. 280-1.

## 28 The Last Empress of the French

stated the case in 1853, at the time of the Imperial marriage, when he spoke of the great impression which Mlle. de Montijo had formerly made in Madrid society by “her daring imagination and the ardent vivacity of her character.” Washington Irving, it may be noted, speaks of her “gay circle” in its “career of fashionable dissipation” at Madrid. But no doubt it was jealousy of her astonishing beauty—“her clear brow shining with youth and grace, her gentle blue eyes sparkling beneath the long lashes which almost conceal them, her exquisitely formed nose, her mouth fresher than a rose-bud, the perfect oval of her face,” as an enthusiast writes—which led to her exile, with her mother, from the Court of Queen Isabella.

Further successes, however, awaited both before their fall. At the double marriage in 1846 of the Queen and her sister Luisa to the Infante Francisco of Assiz and the Duke of Montpensier respectively, mother and daughter were conspicuous figures, and several of the French princes who came in the train of Louis Philippe’s son were said to have fallen in love with the daughter, particularly the Duke of Aumale. Within a year of the wedding the Countess of Montijo was made *Camerara mayor* to the Queen, the highest post attainable by a woman at the Spanish Court, and Eugénie was appointed maid-of-honour. Before the end of

1847 both were deprived of their posts, Eugénie, it was said, for the heinous offence of an evening walk with a young Court official, conduct not to be tolerated by Isabella, who was known to abhor her husband and had already been credited with a lover in General Serrano, popularly nicknamed "The Influence," with whom she had recently fallen out. With regard to the Countess of Montijo, her friends said that she resigned because of the political intrigues against her. Enemies spoke of a discreditable love affair. Whatever the real reason, the Countess, who had certainly lost her favour with the Court, decided to leave Madrid and travel abroad. Eugénie in her disgust wished to enter a convent, but her mother, though an ardent devotee like so many of her countrywomen, was not blind to the chances of worldly life and persuaded her daughter to accompany her on a European tour. One story makes Eugénie actually reach the threshold of the convent when she was met by an old half-witted nun, who came up to her and said, "My daughter, do not seek for rest within our walls; you are called to adorn a throne," which so impressed both her and her mother that there was no more talk about taking the veil. This tale of the "old half-witted nun" is an interesting variant of the prophetic gipsy legend.

The exact course of their wanderings in the

30 The Last Empress of the French succeeding two years has never been clearly described and is not perhaps of much importance. They proceeded first to London, where they remained until September 1848. It was in the year 1848 and in London that certain biographers would place the first meeting of the future Emperor and Empress of the French. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte being in London between the end of February and the third week of September in that year, there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the story that he met the Countess of Montijo and her daughter then. Only the evidence is lacking for this, as it is for reports of a still earlier meeting. The most circumstantial of these other reports states that, when Eugénie was a child of ten years old in Paris, she went with her mother and sister to visit Madame Gabriel Delessert, wife of the Prefect of Police. It was the 12th November, and on that day Louis Napoleon was brought a prisoner to the Prefect's house after the failure of the Strasburg plot. He was detained there two hours before being sent to Lorient, on his way to exile in the United States. The child may have looked out of the window and seen her husband that was to be, arriving in the custody of *gensdarmes*. The probabilities are sufficient for the romantic. They are greater for her meeting with him in London after the "frightful catastrophe," as he called it, of Boulogne

and his escape from Ham. In any case, she must at least have turned her thoughts sometimes to the heir of the Napoleon whom all her family so much admired, when indications were given that France might forgive him for the fiascos of Strasburg and Boulogne. About the time when he left for Paris to take his seat in the National Assembly, to which no less than five departments had elected him, the Montijos also left London and returned to the Continent to carry out their intention of devoting a period to travel. Visits to Brussels, Paris, Spa, and various watering-places were included in the tour. They did not, however, avoid Madrid, and seem to have returned almost to their former position in society there. Prince Napoleon, cousin of Louis and son of the old King Jerome, while on an embassy to the Spanish capital, met them and was much struck by the beauty of the daughter. Later accounts made him contemplate an offer of marriage, but it is on record that years afterwards, when someone suggested to him that it was a pity he had not married the Empress Eugénie rather than his actual wife Clothilde, he replied, with his wonted candour: "No, no, I prefer to be the husband of Clothilde. The Empress is an imaginative woman, fond of pleasures for which I care nothing. I want a mother for my children, and on that score I cannot reproach the Princess." It is impos-

32 The Last Empress of the French  
sible to guess what would have happened had Eugénie married a man of Prince Napoleon's character. Under the Empire the two were always bitterly opposed. It would be difficult in fact to find two people less likely to live in harmony. Against the republican and anti-clerical ideas, the contempt for ordinary notions of military honour, and the degraded theories about the conduct of private life of this remarkable and unpleasant man, his cousin's wife, for all her light-hearted unconventionality, was bound to revolt.

Towards the end of 1849, the Countess and her daughter came to Paris. M. Filon, who, in the capacity of Mérimée's biographer, had access to unpublished correspondence, dates from this period the beginning of the authentic history of Louis Napoleon and Mlle. de Montijo, as she was now called in Paris.<sup>1</sup> It is strange that the date of the earliest meeting of two people who were to be so much before the eyes of the world as Napoleon III. and the Empress Eugénie should be uncertain. Now, however, we have a definite starting-point in the story of their acquaintance. The friends of the Montijos in France were chiefly Orleanist in sympathy, including their banker Baron James de Rothschild,

<sup>1</sup> M. Filon says that "*la passion du prince-président . . . était née dès l'année 1849, mais dans des circonstances qui n'éclairaient pas de leur vraie jour les caractères et les situations.*"



whose wife under the later Empire persistently kept aloof from the Court. The Baron's daughter, however, had married Count Napoleon Camerata, grandson of Eliza Bonaparte, Princess Bacciochi. To Rothschild was attributed the first introduction of the Countess of Montijo to the *salon* of the President, or Prince-President, as the former discredited exile, "the miserable caricature of a party leader" in the Boulogne days, was beginning to be styled. At his own receptions at the Elysée, then, according to the best testimony which we have, Prince Louis Napoleon first came under the influence of the charms whose power ultimately conquered his own desire to consolidate his position and the earnest advice of all his friends to ally himself with royal blood only. But during the next two years he might well have been thought too busy with the affairs of the Republic which he was converting into an Empire to devote much time to the affairs of his heart; besides which, he had still with him the companion whom he had brought with him from London, the Miss Howard who had devoted her resources to the furthering of her lover's cause. It was Eugénie de Montijo herself, according to M. Filon, who took the step which made the Prince-President's regard for her grow to something more substantial. This was when, in her youthful enthusiasm, she wrote to him before the *Coup*

34 The Last Empress of the French  
*d'État* of December 1851, putting all her fortune at his disposition. This interesting letter has never been published, and perhaps is no longer in existence.

Before this, however, while Louis Napoleon and his supporters were preparing the way for the restoration of the Empire which fell in 1815, Eugénie and her mother resumed their European travels, returning to Paris for the winter seasons. In the summer of 1851 they were in London, for Lord Malmesbury writes in his memoirs: "Went to Lady Palmerston's party, where I saw Narvaez and the Spanish beauty Mlle. Montijo. . . . Mlle. Montijo very handsome, auburn hair, beautiful skin and figure."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in the accounts of the State Ball at Buckingham Palace on the 13th June 1851, the list of guests includes the "Countess de Montego (Duchess de Penaranda) and Countess de Feba," under which travesty the names of mother and daughter may be recognised. To the period 1848-51, the least definitely known in their history, the critics of the elder Countess have turned their attention, in order to represent her as violently match-making on behalf of her daughter in various fashionable resorts, particularly at Biarritz and other Pyrenean watering-places where mothers with marriageable girls congregated at the proper seasons. It is the

<sup>1</sup>Entry for 21st June 1851.

misfortune of all daughters whose mothers conduct the chase for a son-in-law to be put in an undignified position, for no necessary fault of their own; and Eugénie de Montijo did not escape this fate. She learnt the bitter lesson afterwards, both as Empress, and in later years, how the foes of her husband and his dynasty could set themselves to hunt for material for scandal in this chapter of her life. Unhappily the Countess de Montijo, for all that she was to Mérimée and his biographer a brilliant combination of beauty, wit, and learning, was not of a character to disarm scandal. The very amiable Countess Stéphanie de Tascher de la Pagerie, who knew her as the Empress's mother and to whom she was "a good and excellent woman, who inspired in me a real sympathy," admitted regarding her and women of the South generally that "doubtless their theories are laxer than ours, though their love is from the heart and calculation rarely enters into it." Considering this admission from a friend, we need not perhaps be so much surprised that to some the Countess of Montijo, although she had a place in the fashionable circles of Madrid, Paris, and even London, should appear as the *mère roturière*, weighing up suitors' prospects and thinking less of honourable intentions than of titles of honour. It speaks well for her daughter's strength of character that she did not reproduce too many of the

36 The Last Empress of the French  
traits of the mother with whom she lived so long.

The bold stroke, however, which according to M. Filon's testimony, turned Louis Napoleon's passion seriously towards his destined bride, was hers and not her mother's. It was a romantic speculation on her part, all the promptings toward which it is not possible to divine. The famous *Coup d'État* cannot be said to have come without due preliminary warning. The existence of a party of full-blown Imperialists was evident as early as the autumn of 1850, when the Prince-President was greeted with shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" at a review near Versailles. The Montijos perhaps had some slight intimation of what was coming, and Eugénie need not have been without hopes of a success when she wrote offering the schemer all she had in event of a failure. The enthusiasm which she displayed, however, had its effect on him, and while he awaited the time when he should be Emperor in name as well as in fact, the struggle in his mind must have been a curious one. Hitherto his official attitude, if we may so call it, toward love may best be shown by what he wrote to Odilon Barrot with regard to Miss Howard, then living with her sister in a house taken for her by the President in the Rue de Cirque, whither he sometimes invited his most intimate friends, like Fleury, Persigny, Mocquard, and Ney, to take tea with

him and "Madame Henriette."<sup>1</sup> "Since up to the present my position has prevented me from getting married," he wrote, "I may be forgiven, I hope, for an affection which injures no one and which I do not seek to parade." And indeed France had scarcely concerned herself about the matter as yet. As virtual Emperor, however, Louis Napoleon knew that he would be expected to marry; and as Emperor by title too he would be expected to marry royal blood. Those, therefore, who would put back the date of a definite offer from him to Eugénie de Montijo some distance from the usually accepted period, would make him act with singular duplicity, seeing that his negotiations for a royal marriage were topics of common conversation at the time.

<sup>1</sup> Dr T. W. Evans, Louis Napoleon's American dentist, in his "Memoirs" writes:—"This house, in which Madame H—— lived, was to him of easy access—a gate in the wall, enclosing the garden of the [Elysée] palace, opening on the street close to the house. There, free from the restraint of official surroundings, the Prince-President loved to take a cup of tea, or to sit during the whole evening sipping a cup of coffee, or smoking a cigarette, his black dog, a great favourite with him, sometimes at his feet and sometimes on his knee."



FROM PLACE VENDÔME  
TO THE TUILERIES





## CHAPTER III

### FROM PLACE VENDÔME TO THE TUILERIES

AT the beginning of the winter of 1852 the Countess of Montijo and her daughter, in accordance with their recent custom, returned to Paris and took up their residence at No. 12, Place Vendôme. Owing to their acquaintances in both Bonapartist and Orleanist circles they had an excellent footing in Parisian society and alike entertained and were received widely. At the Elysée receptions they were regular guests, and the attention paid by the Prince-President to the younger lady was soon noticed. Still it was not until near the end of the year that any of the spectators began to think that it was a serious drama which was being acted before their eyes. Louis Napoleon's adherents imagined that he was merely amusing himself, nor did his opponents suspect that he was likely to compromise himself. Neither party troubled to be charitable to the lady. In November gossip began to take a preciser form. Fresh from his triumphant tour in Southern France, on his return from which Paris had openly greeted him with arches inscribed with the title of

42 The Last Empress of the French  
“Napoleon III.,” the Prince-President gathered together a house-party to spend four days with him at the old Royal Palace of Fontainebleau. Those invited included his cousins Napoleon and Mathilde, Lord Cowley, the British Ambassador, some of the most prominent members of the Government and the Army, and the Countess of Montijo and her daughter. At a hunt in the forest of Fontainebleau Eugénie was given an opportunity of displaying her admirable horsemanship. This so impressed her host that on the following day, the eve of Saint Eugénie, as it happened, he made her a present of her mount, together with a bouquet of flowers. There was nothing necessarily in this graceful action to alarm Louis Napoleon’s followers, and when he returned with his guests to Paris on Monday everyone’s attention was turned in the direction of the plebiscite due at the end of the week. The skilful campaign which had been directed by Persigny, in particular, ended in a vote in favour of the Empire of more than seven millions against a quarter of a million. The official announcement of the result was made on the 1st December, and next day, the first anniversary of the *Coup d’État*, Napoleon III. began to reign over France. Hardly was he seated on the throne when M. Troplong, the Premier, waited upon him and begged him, in the name of the Senate, to marry and secure

the dynasty. The answer was not long in coming, but it was of a nature undreamt of by anyone as yet.<sup>1</sup>

Among the spectators privileged to watch from the windows of the Tuileries the new Emperor's first review in Paris on the 2nd December were Eugénie and her mother. A still more notable honour was paid to them by the invitation to the first entertainment of the Imperial régime, a house-party at Compiègne, the scene of the First Napoleon's marriage with Marie Louise. Here again were many of those who had been visitors to Fontainebleau in the previous month, the two children of King Jerome, the English Ambassador, and others. But the party was on a grander scale, and at it Eugénie saw many of those who formed her future Court, the leaders of Bonapartist society. There, too, was the Ambassador of her native land, the Marquis of Valdegamas, present to witness his countrywoman's triumph. For of that triumph there was no doubt. In the series of dinners, dances, hunting expeditions, and *fêtes*, she was prominent always, and the Emperor took no pains to conceal his admiration. At the hunt in Compiègne forest on the 20th December he was said with difficulty to leave her side, as

<sup>1</sup> A few months earlier, in May, when the Senate had declined to hand over the Crown jewels in its custody until the Prince-President should have married, he was reported to have remarked "*Je ne suis pas pressé!*"

44    The Last Empress of the French clothed in a close-fitting habit, with a diamond-clasped ostrich feather in her hat, spurs on her high heels, and a pearl-handled whip in her hand, she rode her thorough-bred horse disdaining the ordinary ladies' saddle. He gave more public proof now of his feelings. The best known story is that told by M. de Maupas, Napoleon's Minister of Police and one of the plotters of the *Coup d'État*, of the morning walk over the still dewy lawns of Compiègne, when "Mlle. de Montijo, whose nature was full of poetry, took pleasure in admiring the capricious and magical effects of light. She called particular attention to a clover-leaf so gracefully hung with dewdrops as to look like a real gem. When the walk was over the Emperor drew aside Count Bacciochi, who set out for Paris a few minutes later. Next day he brought back a charming trinket in the exact form of a trefoil, each of whose leaves bore a superb diamond drop." In the evening a lottery took place, in which it was arranged that the jewel should fall to her who had admired the clover on the lawns of Compiègne. According to another story, while walking at her side, the Emperor asked her whether in her life she had ever had a serious attachment. "I should deceive you, *sire*," she is reported to have answered, "if I did not confess that my heart has been touched—more than once, even. But I have never forgotten that I am Mlle. de Montijo," she

added. "Then, mademoiselle," said Napoleon, "you shall be Empress." She remarked that some of his guests were inclined to slight her, whereon he broke off a branch from a hedge, twisted it into a crown, and put it on her head, saying: "While you wait for the other!"

Whether this tale is authentic or not, the Emperor's infatuation was so evident that when the house-party returned to Paris on the 28th December his half-brother Morny ventured to prophesy: "She will be Empress." The visit to Compiègne had been prolonged to eleven days, a week beyond Napoleon's original intention, so much did it please him; and all those whom he had entertained were talking, on their return, of the favour shown to the young Spaniard. They could hardly anticipate, however, that Morny's prediction was to be proved correct immediately. According to the standard version of this romantic history, such was the case only three days after the departure from Compiègne. On the last night of 1852 there was a reception at the Tuileries. There, the account runs, a French lady of rank made a sneering remark about "Mademoiselle de Montijo" as she passed her in the Salle des Maréchaux. Eugénie, who was on the arm of Toulangeon, one of Napoleon's military supporters, caught the remark and, deeply hurt, went to the Emperor and desired leave to withdraw from a Court where she was

46 The Last Empress of the French insulted. Napoleon pacified her with the promise that he would avenge her, and on New Year's Day 1853 sent to her mother a definite offer for her hand. This was accepted, but for reasons of State the engagement was not yet made public. Such then is the form of the story usually accepted. It is not quite in accordance with either the report current in January 1853, or the details which have since been revealed of Napoleon's matrimonial negotiations in Europe. Before giving the ascertainable facts we may stop to consider the earlier ideas of Napoleon III. with regard to marriage, since they help to explain the situation which had now arisen.

As early as 1834, two years after he had become, by the death of the Duke of Reichstadt, the recognised Bonapartist claimant to the French throne, rumour suggested a marriage between Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and the widowed Queen Maria of Portugal. He hastened to disclaim this mistake in a manifesto, however flattering might be "the idea of an alliance with a young and virtuous queen"; and Maria wedded instead his cousin the Duke of Leuchtenberg, who died two months after. In 1836 Louis Napoleon entertained the thought of marrying his cousin Mathilde, then only sixteen years of age; nor was her father, with whom she was living at Lausanne, altogether hostile to the plan. The families were on good terms, and

Louis was giving her brother Napoleon mathematical lessons at Arenenberg. The hopeless fiasco of Strasburg, however, completely alienated Jerome, who strongly deprecated his nephew making attempts which he thought could only retard his own return to France. Shipped by the French Government to America, Louis Napoleon wrote on the voyage a melancholy letter to his mother Hortense, in which he said: "When I came back some months ago after taking Mathilde to her home, on entering the park [at Arenenberg] I found a tree broken by the storm and said to myself 'Our marriage will be broken off.' What I vaguely guessed has come to pass. Have I exhausted in 1836 all the happiness in my lot?" In 1840 Mathilde married the Russian banker Count Anatole Demidoff, who was also Prince of San Donato in the Holy Roman Empire. Her cousin shed tears when he heard the news and apparently abandoned all ideas of marriage for many years. Nearly six of these years, it is true, were spent in prison at Ham; and when he escaped to London and commenced his last campaign for the French throne, Louis Napoleon had little time to think of a wife. He did not therefore live as a celibate, however, and the relations into which he entered with Henrietta Howard in London proved lucky for him, as the Englishwoman put at his disposal all the money she

48 The Last Empress of the French could command. This was of the utmost service to him when he set foot in France again. Indeed he is commonly stated to have had no ready money in 1848 except what he had received from his cousin Mathilde and from Miss Howard. His enemies accused him of designing to make the latter Empress. But his view about her is clearly enough shown in the already quoted letter to Odilon Barrot. He did not discard her entirely until he had actually received the title of Emperor,<sup>1</sup> and then he made her Countess of Beauregard, with a chateau of that name near Saint Cloud, and repaid her abundantly for the financial aid which she had given him. His marriage, nevertheless, made an enemy of her. "She could have forgiven him a princess" was her scornful comment. To show that she did not forgive his actual choice, she took pains to appear in public as much as she could where she was likely to encounter the Emperor and Empress. Her hostility continued until her

<sup>1</sup> At the end of August 1852 George Harris, private secretary to Lord Malmesbury, who had sent him on a mission to Louis Napoleon, wrote of his difficulties in obtaining an audience until he "called on Mrs Howard, toadied and flattered her, stating that I was in a great hurry to get back to London and only wanted to see H.H. the President for two minutes," whereon she despatched an orderly to Napoleon, who the same day sent an invitation to him to accompany him on a shooting expedition on the morrow. Mrs Howard is still spoken of as the President's mistress in Malmesbury's entry for the 1st November.



death twelve years later, an event which it is perhaps hardly surprising to hear did not cause Napoleon III. to exhibit much grief.

As President only, Louis Napoleon might remain single. When his elevation to the position of Emperor was clearly indicated, his marriage became not merely a matter of public interest but an affair of State. So his advisers and well-wishers told him, and he could not disagree with their view. The list of eligible princesses was anxiously consulted. He might have preferred still his cousin Mathilde, the devoted friend of him and his cause; but to such a marriage there were insuperable obstacles. Although she was separated from her profligate husband, whom the Tsar (her dead mother's cousin) had compelled to allow her 200,000 francs a year, the Roman Church would grant no divorce. Moreover, her father and her brother were firm against an alliance which would compromise the rights of succession of the latter, heir to the Imperial throne in default of offspring of Louis Napoleon. The idea, therefore, was out of the question. In the family circle there was another princess who was considered eligible, Carola Vasa, granddaughter both of Stéphanie Beauharnais, the still living dowager Grand Duchess of Baden, and of Gustavus IV., de-throned King of Sweden. It is said that it was Napoleon's cousin the Duchess of Hamilton,

50 The Last Empress of the French  
formerly Princess Mary of Baden, who first recommended to him an alliance with her niece Carola. But her father, the exiled Prince Gustavus Vasa, had become an Austrian field-marshal, and memories of Marie Antoinette and Marie Louise made the Emperor Francis Joseph unwilling to see an Austrian Princess going to France. Nevertheless negotiations proceeded for some time, and the old Grand Duchess seemed at first favourable to her grand-child's marriage with a Napoleon. Finally a refusal was given, on the ground that Princess Carola was already promised to another. Napoleon's enemies spread the report that the girl had been unwilling to marry her kinsman, not liking his portrait. She married, in the year of his wedding with Eugénie de Montijo, Prince Albert, afterwards King of Saxony. The negotiations, however, did not come to an end much before the conclusion of 1852.

Other names, in the meantime, were suggested in plenty, German, Russian, Spanish, English, and others ; and French society eagerly discussed the chances of various unmarried princesses. On their side, the royal families of Europe, particularly of Northern Europe, remained cool toward proposals. They saw no certainty in Napoleon's position, before or after he had received the full title of Emperor, and were loth to entrust any of their daughters to his care. He could hardly

have expected to find them otherwise than reluctant. He knew well enough himself the dangers which surrounded him in France and could not suppose the rulers of Europe ignorant of them. The humiliation which he consented to endure must excite sympathy. It was bitter indeed to be put up for sale and find no bidders. His advisers endeavoured to lessen the bitterness by pointing out the inevitability of the initial difficulty in finding a bride and urging that a little time, by strengthening his position, would make him courted instead of a fruitless wooer. Possibly, little as he was wont to yield to advice which did not harmonise with his secret wishes, he might have consented to persist in his overtures until he succeeded, had not the violence of his passion for the choice of his heart carried him away and driven him to cease the ungrateful begging for a princess's hand and to risk all on romance. He made one final effort first, about which, thanks to the interesting indiscretions of the Greville and Malmesbury memoirs, we have more exact knowledge than about his other matrimonial attempts.

Among the princesses whose names had suggested themselves to Napoleon or his councillors was Princess Adelaide of Hohenlohe, a niece of Queen Victoria, with whom she was staying in England in 1852. While the Emperor approached the father, Prince Hohenlohe, his

52 The Last Empress of the French

Foreign Minister, Morny wrote to Lord Malmesbury divulging the scheme and, explaining that the great object was to tighten the bonds between England and France, requesting him to lay it before Queen Victoria. The replies which this double approach elicited were not very satisfactory, but they did not altogether preclude the possibility of the match. Prince Hohenlohe stated that he would not dispose of his daughter's hand without her consent, but that he would leave the decision to her. Queen Victoria was annoyed at the reference of the matter to her, as it put her in an awkward position, whether she approved or disapproved; but apparently she did not give the idea that she would oppose the marriage. Malmesbury says that on the 28th December, when he and his colleagues went to give up their seals of office at Windsor, there was a talk about the proposal, Prince Albert reading a letter from Prince Hohenlohe, who said that he was not sure of the settlement being satisfactory and that there were religious and moral objections. The Queen and Prince Albert "talked of the marriage reasonably and weighed the pros and cons." They were afraid of Princess Adelaide being dazzled if she heard of the offer, and the Queen spoke of the fate of previous French rulers' wives, "but did not positively object to the marriage."<sup>1</sup> All seemed, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> In his entry for the 16th February 1853 Greville says

## Place Vendôme to the Tuileries 53

to depend on the decision of Princess Adelaide herself.

While her answer was being awaited, Walewski, French Ambassador in London, crossed over to Paris. He arrived on the 31st December, as the evidence of contemporary newspapers shows. Hardly had he arrived when he met Lord Cowley (one of the guests at Fontainebleau and Compiègne, it will be remembered), who told him of the suspicions aroused in Paris that Napoleon was designing to marry Mlle. de Montijo. Walewski, who had proved a popular

that Lord Cowley, back from Paris on the previous day, in relating to him what he knew of the negotiations for the Princess Adelaide's hand, said that "the Queen had behaved very well and had abstained from giving any advice or expressing any opinion on the subject." Cowley had derived his information from Walewski, the French Ambassador. On the 17th February Cowley went to see Queen Victoria, and two days later he gave Greville a rather different account of what had happened at the end of December. He spoke of the Queen's annoyance at the position in which she had been put and said that "the result was that the Queen set herself against the match, though the girl, left to herself, would have accepted." This second account Greville says was the correct one, as it was given by Cowley after he had seen Queen Victoria. This does not show, however, that Queen Victoria's sentiments were known in France at the end of 1852. It must be noted that Greville in his entry for the 12th May 1854 records another conversation with Lord Cowley, in which he represents him as insisting that Napoleon's marriage was a fatal measure. "He would have done far better if he could have married the Hohenlohe girl, who was dying to be Empress, and Cowley thinks that the Queen was wrong to prevent the match."

54    The Last Empress of the French representative of France in London, had recently succeeded in persuading the British Government to take the initiative in recognising the Emperor as Napoleon *III.*, and he hoped to complete his work by the Emperor's marriage to a princess who was considered almost English. In great surprise and mortification therefore at Cowley's intelligence, he told him how matters stood. The English Ambassador advised him to exert his influence to "stop the demonstrations going on between the Emperor and the Mlle. de Montijo." The next day Walewski met Cowley again and told him that he had seen the Emperor, who shook him by both hands and exclaimed "*Mon cher, je suis pris!*" explaining that he was resolved to marry Mlle. de Montijo. Walewski represented to his master the position in which "the other affair" stood, whereon Napoleon consented to await Princess Adelaide's answer and to marry her if she accepted him; otherwise he would carry out the resolve he had just revealed. On the following day (the 2nd January, if Greville's dates for the Walewski-Cowley conversations are exact) the Princess's answer came — "very civil but declining on account of her youth, and not feeling equal to such a position."

Such being the history of the last of Napoleon's efforts to obtain a royal bride, it is clear that, in spite of his "*Mon cher, je suis pris!*" to

Walewski, he did not consider at the beginning of January 1853 that he was bound by a promise of marriage to Eugénie de Montijo. Those who antedate his definite offer to her make him guilty of very bad faith; and a formal proposal on New Year's Day is inconsistent with his promise to Walewski that he would wait for Princess Adelaide's answer. That answer proving unfavourable, Napoleon was released from the promise and, as he had warned Walewski, he proceeded to carry out his desire, though nothing appears to prove an offer to make Eugénie his bride and Empress before the 16th January. All society in the interval, however, was eagerly discussing her prospects. The Emperor was seen to engage her in long and serious conversation at a ball in the house of his cousin Mathilde, and to dance with her at a State Ball in the Tuileries on the 12th. The well-informed claimed to know that there was an engagement, and the enemies of the Emperor had readily invented stories of a doubtful family record for the prospective bride. But it was not until Sunday, the 16th January, according to what was accepted as true in Paris at the time,<sup>1</sup> that Napoleon offered marriage and a throne. On the following day he announced to his Council of Ministers that he had proposed and been

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Paris correspondent of *The Times*, letter of the 19th January 1853.

56 The Last Empress of the French accepted, adding that his mind was fully made up and that it was a marriage of affection. There was no public announcement until the 19th, when *La Patrie* made the following statement: "It is reported that a happy event, calculated to strengthen his Imperial Majesty's Government and to ensure the future of his dynasty, is shortly to take place. The Emperor is about to marry Mlle. de Montijo, Countess of Teba, and the official notification of the wedding will be made to the Legislative Body on Saturday. The Countess belongs to one of the highest families of Spain and is sister to the Duchess of Alba. She is endowed with great intelligence and possessed of remarkable beauty and grace." The other papers were requested to copy this paragraph, without comment, from *La Patrie*; while the official *Moniteur* on the 20th issued the brief notice that on the 22nd the Emperor would deliver a communication relative to his marriage to the Senate, Legislative Body, and Council of State assembled at the Tuileries for that purpose.

Not even now did everyone believe in the engagement. Du Casse, aide-de-camp to the Emperor's uncle Jerome, going home from his club on the night of the 21st, was asked by the ex-King what was the topic of the day. Du Casse told him the marriage of the Emperor and Mlle. de Montijo, whereon Jerome de-



nounced it as a *bêtise* and forbade him to spread such absurd rumours. Next morning, at eight o'clock, du Casse received an urgent message from Jerome, still in bed, who, on his arrival, said to him: "Well, Louis *is* to marry Mlle. de Montijo. Fleury, Ney, and Toulangeon have done their utmost to prevent it. Order my state carriage for eleven. We must be at the Tuileries at twelve."

Thus, after a study of the Hohenlohe negotiations and of contemporary Paris evidence, the story of a definite offer by Napoleon for Eugénie's hand on the 1st January seems to fall to the ground. Whatever Napoleon may have said at the Tuileries reception on the last day of 1852 or written on the morrow, he still considered himself free to marry Princess Adelaide if she accepted him, and it was not until the middle of January that he bound himself irrevocably. With regard to an earlier proposal, it was firmly asserted from the earliest time, though denied by such thorough partisans as the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher de la Pagerie, for instance, that Napoleon first made approaches to the Countess of Montijo to learn whether anything short of the position of Empress, such as the euphemism called morganatic marriage, would satisfy her daughter. According to the story, the Countess dismissed Fleury, whom Napoleon employed as his agent to her, in contemptuous

## 58 The Last Empress of the French

silence, while Eugénie wrote to the Emperor quoting the saying that Cæsar's wife must be above reproach. The details of the story may be merely intelligent invention, but there is nothing in our knowledge of the Third Napoleon's character which need make us disbelieve that he first attempted to obtain what he wished at less than the full price. Nor is such an attempt necessarily inconsistent with an honourable statement, after he had made up his mind to pay the price, of the drawbacks to the honour which he was conferring. That he made this statement is revealed in the Greville Memoirs,<sup>1</sup> Greville learning it from Lord Clarendon who heard "in a round-about way" the contents of a letter from the Countess of Montijo to a friend, the Marchioness of Santa Cruz. According to this, when Eugénie expressed to Napoleon her sense of the greatness of the position to which he wished to raise her, he replied that it was only fair that he should set before her the whole truth and let her know that, if the position was very high, it was also perhaps very dangerous. Greville continues: "He then represented to her in detail all the dangers with which he was environed, his unpopularity with the higher classes, the *malveillance* of the Great Powers, the possibility of his being any day assassinated at her side, his popularity indeed with the masses,

<sup>1</sup> Entry for 9th February 1853.

but the fleeting character of their favour, but above all the existence of a good deal of disaffection and hostility in the army, the most serious thing of all. If this latter danger, he said, were to become more formidable, he knew very well how to avert it by a war; and though his earnest desire was to maintain peace, if no other means of self-preservation should remain, he should not shrink from that, which would at once rally the whole army to one common feeling. All this he told her with entire frankness, and without concealing the perils of his position, or his sense of them, and it is one of the most creditable traits I have ever heard of him. It was of course calculated to engage and attach any woman of high spirit and generosity.”

The facts of the case, if they are as given above, present Napoleon in a more favourable light than the accounts of the would-be eulogists of his reign, who in upholding a definite offer of marriage on or before the 1st January 1853, thereby involved their hero in the baseness of being willing to break his word to Eugénie de Montijo for the sake of a Princess. Napoleon appears to have acted like a man distraught between reasons of love and State. Unable to gain the love he desired without the gift of a crown, and urged by his Ministers to bestow that crown elsewhere, he delayed to the last moment an absolute decision. In his very diffi-

60 The Last Empress of the French  
cult position, that was hardly reprehensible. As  
for the attitude of the Countess of Montijo and  
her daughter, assuredly neither had any reason  
to be ashamed of the part which she played.  
Both were attacked, however, the Countess as  
driving a hard bargain for her daughter, while  
against Eugénie was directed the celebrated gibe  
of a rival beauty—“*I* might have been Empress,  
had *I* resisted.”

THE IMPERIAL  
MARRIAGE







**Napoleon and Eugénie.**

From coloured lithograph by Alophe, 1855.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE IMPERIAL MARRIAGE

HAVING made his decision, Napoleon had to face the storm. His family, his ministers, and France itself were indignant at the idea of such an alliance as he announced. Jerome, as we have seen, refused to believe the story when it was told to him. Mathilde is said to have gone down on her knees to her cousin to beg him not to compromise himself so. Count Tascher de la Pagerie, who was especially dear to Napoleon III. as having been to the last a faithful friend of Queen Hortense, expressed his sorrow at having been thought unworthy of the Emperor's confidence, since he had not been warned beforehand of what was coming. When told that he was to be put over the Empress's household, he wished to withdraw to Germany and was with difficulty persuaded to remain. Some of the Emperor's ministers were equally outspoken. Three threatened to resign at once, while Persigny, who had the reputation of being more Napoleonist than Napoleon himself, told him frankly that the labour of the 2nd December had been spent in vain if he were going to end

## 64 The Last Empress of the French

like this. On all sides he was besought not to give way before the prejudices of Europe when in a little time he could conquer them. Society for the most part sneered or was horror-stricken,<sup>1</sup> the general public was amazed, and there was a fall on the Bourse as soon as the news became definitely known. Nor did the Emperor make matters better by the remarkable speech in which he officially announced his decision to the assembled Senate, Legislative Body, and Council of State in the throne-room of the Tuileries on the 22nd January. Supported by ex-King Jerome on his right hand and Prince Napoleon on his left, the Emperor stood in front of the throne and read out an oration which bore the stamp of its author's personality in every line.

“This union which I am contracting,” he said, after a few opening words, “is not in accordance

<sup>1</sup> There were, however, some at least who did not altogether disapprove. A letter from the Marquise de Contades to her father Marshal Castellane is extant, in which she says, on the 16th January 1853, that nothing is being talked of in Paris except a marriage between the Emperor and Mlle. de Montijo. “Between ourselves,” she continues, “it might well come about. The Emperor has conceived a very violent passion for her and seems to me to be quite in earnest. As for her, she acts with reserve and dignity. Politically the marriage appears at first sight to have drawbacks; but if it does not come off, it is more than probable that the Emperor will not marry at all, for his repugnance to marriage so far has been only too well proved, and certain old English ties, which still bind him and are the terror of those who love him, may restrain him.”

with the political traditions of old. Therein lies its advantage. By a succession of revolutions France has abruptly separated herself from the rest of Europe. A wise government must seek her return within the pale of the ancient monarchies; but this result will be much more certainly attained by a frank and upright policy, by loyal conduct, than by royal alliances, which create false security and often substitute family interests for those of the nation. Moreover the example of the past has left behind in the minds of the people superstitious feelings. . . . One woman alone seems to have brought good fortune with her and to live longer than the rest in popular memory, and she, the good and modest wife of General Bonaparte, was not the issue of royal blood. . . . When, in the face of old Europe, a man is borne upward by the force of a new principle to the height of the ancient dynasties, it is not by attributing antiquity to his escutcheon and by seeking at all costs to introduce himself into the family of kings that he makes himself acceptable. Rather it is by remembering always his origin, by preserving his own character, and by frankly taking up in the face of Europe the position of a *parvenu*—a glorious title when one wins it by the free suffrages of a great nation.

“As I was obliged to depart from the precedents followed up till now, my marriage became

66 The Last Empress of the French  
simply a private matter. There remained only the choice of the person. She whom I have chosen is of exalted birth. French by education and by the memory of the blood her father shed in the cause of the Empire, she has the advantage, as a Spaniard, of having no family in France to whom honours and dignities must be given. Endowed with every quality of the mind, she will be an ornament to the throne, and in the hour of danger one of its bravest defenders. A devout Catholic, she will address her prayers with mine to Heaven for the welfare of France. Gracious and good, she will, I firmly hope, exhibit in the same position the virtues of the Empress Josephine.

“So, gentlemen, I am here to say to France: ‘I have preferred a woman whom I love and respect to an unknown, an alliance with whom might with its advantages have brought the necessity for sacrifices. Without disrespect to anyone, I yield to my inclinations.’ . . . Soon I shall go to Notre Dame to present the Empress to the people and the Army. Their confidence in me will assure their sympathy for her whom I have chosen, and you, gentlemen, when you learn to know her, will be convinced that once more I have been inspired by Providence.”

Though not devoid of eloquence, this speech had at least two unfortunate points in it. It provoked sneers at the inclusion of the “Empress

Josephine's virtues" in the dowry to the bride. But, worse still, the allusion to the *parvenu* hurt the pride of the nation who had put themselves under the rule of that *parvenu*. Rhetorically the boast was effective; diplomatically it was a grave error. The strong point was the appeal to romantic love. But, even among those of his listeners who felt the romance, there may well have been many who agreed with a statesman whose comment was: "This marriage is a lovely poem. The Emperor rivals M. de Musset; and his reign, I fear, will be but 'the song of a night.'"<sup>1</sup>

While the Emperor was announcing the name of her whom he had determined to make his wife, she was at home with her mother in the house on the Place Vendôme. After the ceremony in the throne-room at the Tuileries, many of the Emperor's hearers hastened to pay their respects to the coming Empress. Among them were Jerome, Prince Napoleon, and their aides-de-camp. Du Casse describes Eugénie, whose figure and shoulders and "more than blond" hair excite his admiration, as sitting on a high stool in the middle of the room, in a *négligée*

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by M. Pierre de Lano, "Le Secret d'un Empire." The speaker is said to be the same statesman who officially conveyed Napoleon's proposal to the Place Vendôme. For the first part of the remark, compare Lamartine's "The Emperor has just realised the most beautiful dream possible to man, to raise the woman he loves above all other women."

## 68 The Last Empress of the French

morning toilette, while her mother listened to the compliments which the old King's previous indignation did not prevent him from paying with his well-known courtly grace. On the same day mother and daughter moved from the Place Vendôme to rooms prepared for them at the Elysée. Here, for the eight days before the wedding at Notre Dame, the Countess of Teba, as Eugénie was now officially called in France, spent the remainder of her unmarried life. She refused, as Spanish etiquette demanded, all invitations, including one to the Tuileries Ball on the 22nd itself, when her absence was a great disappointment to the curious. Every day the Emperor paid her a visit and brought her a bouquet, and every day too crowds of callers arrived to leave their cards or write their names in the visitors' book. The important task of purchasing the trousseau was entrusted to Madame Fould, wife of the Minister of State, but of course Eugénie and her mother must have been consulted also. Society was stirred at the news that the *pointe d'Alençon* lace alone was valued at 40,000 francs.<sup>1</sup> Gossip represented

<sup>1</sup> A list of the trousseau may be interesting to some. It included thirty-four dresses by Madame Vignon:—three morning peignoirs, decorated with Mechlin and Valenciennes lace, and lined with rose, blue, and white silk; two *robes de chambre*, one black velvet with sky-blue silk facings, the other *gros de Navarre*, with a white silk lining; a full dress of rosewatered silk, with long basques, ornamented with silk and lace; and one of green taffetas, with flowers, ornamented

the bride as in no way unduly elated at her fortune, as no less familiar than before with her old friends nor less ready to see them, but “wearing the incipient honours of her approaching rank quite as if she had a consciousness that they were not superior to her merits.” This is peculiarly Spanish, comments the Paris correspondent of *The Times*, recording the talk of the day.

In many ways Eugénie showed that she had not forgotten she was a Spaniard. Already two days before the official announcement of her engagement she had written to Queen Isabella:—

MADAME,—Your Majesty will allow me to allude to what my mother has the honour of

with *plumes frisées*. From Mlle. Palmyre there were twenty dresses:—one white brocade with flowers of silk and gold, ornamented down the front with different coloured flowers; one with three flounces in silk and silver; another of velvet with blond lace flounces, decked with bees and crowned eagles of gold; one of blue velvet with *Alençon* lace; one black velvet with gold guipure flounces; one pearl-grey satin with Brussels lace flounces; three Court mantles of silk watered with gold and silver—rose, blue, and white in colour—one ornamented with gold blond, one with silver blond, and the third with white blond, and all decorated with tufts of flowers and feathers. For the Civil Marriage, one dress was rose-coloured satin covered with *pointe d’Angleterre* lace, ornamented at the bottom with *agrafes* of white lilac, with a corsage *drapé*, having the same ornaments; the other, white satin with *pointe d’Alençon* lace, ornamented with diamonds. (From description in *The Morning Post*.)

70 The Last Empress of the French  
laying more fully at your feet and to restrict myself, on an occasion which overwhelms me with so much honour, to a loyal tribute of my emotions. Elevated as I am by the designs of Divine Providence, which I accept without knowing them, all my inclinations accord with my duties in urging me to renew here the sincere profession of these sentiments of respect, loyalty, and love towards your august person in which, to my happiness, I was brought up. I am sure, Madame, that Your Majesty, well persuaded of what I have just written, will deign to consider fortunate the event which brings me to a throne. I am above all confident that Your Majesty, satisfied with my personal sentiments, will be convinced that in the lofty and dangerous position which I am to occupy, I shall have no thought but that of contributing to the utmost extent of my power to draw still closer the ties which unite two great nations and two great sovereigns to whose service I shall perpetually devote myself in love and duty.

EUGÉNIE DE GUZMAN, COUNTESS OF 'TEBA.

The Queen replied expressing her satisfaction, and saying: "You can rely on my entire consent to an union so glorious for you, and be assured of the wishes which I make for your happiness and that of the Emperor, desiring that, both



being guided by the Almighty's hand, you may lead a great nation to the highest point of prosperity and well-being. In the difficult and dangerous path which you must hereafter tread, accept confidently the guidance of the Supreme Being, and the duty of sacrificing everything for the Emperor and for France. Such are the sentiments of the Queen and the counsels of your affectionate ISABELLA."<sup>1</sup>

If Eugénie, while sensible of the fortune which had befallen her, could regard it without undue pride or exultation, neither was her mother so lost in joy at the extent of her success as match-maker as to ignore the possibility of another side to the brilliant future which she anticipated for her daughter. She wrote to the Marquis of Roche Lambert, one of her oldest French friends: "I do not know whether to be happy or to weep. Eugénie is to be Queen over your France, and I can but remember that your Queens have had little happiness. In spite of myself, I am possessed by the thought of Marie Antoinette, and I wonder whether my child may not suffer the same fate." A very salutary reflection, no doubt, in the hour of triumph.

In the interval before the wedding every effort was made to influence the Emperor's subjects in

<sup>1</sup> These "curious letters," says Baron Imbert de Saint-Amand, who gives them in full, were communicated to him by the Duke of Mandas, Spanish Ambassador at the Tuileries.

72 The Last Empress of the French  
favour of his bride. For the benefit of the  
aristocracy, the Heralds' College in Paris dis-  
covered that the Countess of Teba belonged to  
"the House of Guzman, all the branches of  
which have played a distinguished part in history ;  
among many others, the Dukes of Medina, Las  
Torres, Medina-Sidonia, and Olivares, the Counts  
of Montijo, Teba, and Villa Verde, the Marquises  
of Ardales, Algara, etc., Grandees of Spain."  
Adherents of the late King learnt that the  
Countess of Teba was already using her influence  
to induce the Emperor to restore to the Orleans  
family the proceeds of the confiscated property  
of Louis Philippe. Religious people heard of  
her visit to the Convent of the Sacred Heart,  
her old school, and of the warmth of her greet-  
ing to the sisters. For the populace there were  
whispers of an extensive amnesty suggested by  
her to Napoleon, and of a small reduction in the  
Army, while the *Moniteur* recorded how she  
hastened to bring help to a workman who fell  
from a scaffolding in one of the streets of Paris  
as she passed. Of her benevolence a most  
striking proof was given only two days before  
the marriage, when at a session of the Municipal  
Council a letter from her was read by the Prefect  
of the Seine, declining a gift of a diamond *parure*  
which the City of Paris proposed to make to  
her, and asking that the 600,000 francs voted for  
it should be devoted to charity. "It pains me

to think that the first public act connected with my name at the moment of marriage should be a heavy expense to the City of Paris," she wrote. "Allow me, therefore, not to accept your gift, however flattering it be to me. You would make me happier by employing in charity the sum on which you have fixed for the purchase of the jewelry." The Council was touched and resolved to devote the 600,000 francs to the foundation of a school, bearing the Empress Eugénie's name, at which sixty young girls of the poorest class should be trained and kept until situations were found for them. Public opinion, which seems to have condemned the City's gift as excessive, was conciliated by the graceful refusal.

Nevertheless, the struggle against prejudice was hard. The fall in the Funds, indeed, which after the semi-official announcement of the engagement was so great as to cause serious alarm, proved only temporary. But, while the working class showed signs of reconciliation to the idea of an Empress not of royal blood, the upper section of society, on which Napoleon's hold was very precarious, remained for the most part unfriendly. A busy campaign of scandal against the Emperor's choice was carried on, and anonymous libels were so freely circulated that the Prefect of Police found it necessary to give orders that anyone found spreading unfavourable

74 The Last Empress of the French reports about the Countess of Teba should be arrested with a view to prosecution before the public tribunals. It was known that a certain section of Legitimists were not innocent of complicity in this scandalous campaign, but the difficulty was to bring the guilt home to them, since it was possible for libels to be printed in Belgium or Germany and smuggled across the frontier, even if the police could prevent the printing of scurrilous matter in Paris itself, which was by no means easy. These underhand attacks continued after the wedding and ultimately led to a number of arrests.

While the public were being strenuously wooed to look with favour on their Empress, preparations were being made that the pomp of the marriage ceremony should impress them thoroughly. The civil act was performed on the evening preceding the religious wedding and in the semi-privacy of the Tuileries. At eight P.M. on Saturday, the 29th January, Eugénie and her mother left their rooms in the Elysée and, preceded by a carriage containing the ladies-in-waiting, drove to the Tuileries in the company of the Duke of Cambacères, Master of Ceremonies, and the Spanish Ambassador. Three stages in the bride's progress were marked by her reception at the foot of the staircase by the Grand Chamberlain, the Duke of Bassano; on the threshold of the first saloon, by her new

## The Imperial Marriage 75

cousins, Prince Napoleon and his sister; and in the family saloon by the Emperor himself, ex-King Jerome, Princes Lucien and Pierre Bonaparte and Lucien Murat, Princesses Bacciochi and Murat, the cardinals, and the chief civil, military, and naval officials of the Empire. At nine o'clock all assembled moved to the Salle des Maréchaux, where Fould, the Minister of State, pronounced the words which united husband and wife and placed the register before them to sign. This was the famous family register in which Napoleon I. had inscribed the events relating to the Bonapartes, from the adoption as his son of Eugène Beauharnais on the 2nd March 1806, to the birth of his only legitimate child, the King of Rome, on the 20th March 1811. In the Act which they now signed the husband is described simply as the Emperor Napoleon III., while Eugénie appears as “Her Excellency Marie-Eugénie Guzman y Palafox Fernandez de Cordova, Leyva y la Cerda, Comtesse de Teba, de Banos, de Mora, de Santa-Cruz, de la Sierra, Marquise de Moya de Ardalles de Osera, Vicomtesse de la Calzada, etc., Grandee of Spain of the First Class.” After Napoleon and Eugénie, the witnesses signed—on behalf of the Emperor, the members of the Imperial family, the Cardinals, the Marshals of France, and the Presidents of the Senate, the Legislative Body, and the Council of State;

76 The Last Empress of the French on behalf of the bride, her mother, her uncle General Alvarez de Toledo, Count Calvez, brother of the Duke of Berwick and Alba, the Duke of Ossuna, the Marquis of Bedmar, and the Spanish Ambassador. The Imperial couple then retired, while Eugénie changed her white satin gown for one of rose colour covered with lace and put on a gold and diamond circlet, and soon rejoined the guests, numbering over five hundred now, in the theatre-room of the Tuileries. Here was performed a cantata specially composed by Auber for the occasion, and at half-past eleven the assembly broke up, the Empress being conducted back to the Tuileries to spend her last night with her mother.

The preparations at the Cathedral of Notre Dame had been the wonder of all Paris for a week past. Not only had the interior been transformed, but gangs working day and night had been engaged on the outside and had constructed a huge wooden building in front of the Cathedral to give extra accommodation for spectators. The day opened brilliantly, and from an early hour on Sunday processions were on foot in the streets representing the various trades, with their banners flying. The sounds of military bands began to be heard about ten o'clock, and infantry proceeded to line all the streets through which the marriage procession was to pass. A little before twelve, Eugénie started

again from the Elysée to the Tuileries, accompanied by her mother and Count Tascher de la Pagerie, whom, a few days before, the Emperor had appointed Grand Master of her household. A carriage with her two chief Ladies and her First Chamberlain, Count Tascher's son, preceded her, and a cavalry escort surrounded her. At noon an artillery salute announced her arrival at the Tuileries. Once again she went through the elaborate reception ceremony, being met first by the Grand Chamberlain, then by Prince Napoleon and Princess Mathilde, and finally by the Emperor and his supporters. The Emperor, after greeting her, led her by the hand out on the balcony in view of a crowd assembled below, which was duly demonstrative at the sight. Then the procession set out for Notre Dame, led by a magnificent display of staff and cavalry uniforms, by military bands, and by the carriages of the various Imperial households, those of King Jerome and Prince Napoleon, of Princess Mathilde and the Countess of Montijo. Finally, in the middle of its special escort, came the gilded coach, drawn by eight white horses, which had carried Napoleon I. and Josephine to Notre Dame on the 2nd December 1804, and Napoleon and Marie Louise to their wedding on the 2nd April 1810. As usual, there was an omen. The coach was surmounted by a large Imperial crown, which fell off just as the

## 78 The Last Empress of the French

Tuileries triumphal arch was passed, so that a halt was necessary to replace it. It was pointed out that the same thing had happened to Napoleon I. and Marie Louise. Apparently the Imperial wedding coach was kept in bad repair between such ceremonies.

The vast crowds were as hearty in their behaviour as could be desired, particularly in the newly constructed Rue de Rivoli, where shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" and "*Vive l'Impératrice!*" were continuous during the passage of the procession. All public and many other buildings were decorated with flowers, evergreens, tricolours, and green velvet hangings with golden bees upon them. When the Cathedral was at last reached, the results of the week's work were seen. All the doorways, the principal of which was reserved for the Imperial coach only, had been embellished with specially built porches in Gothic style, hung with shields bearing the initials "L." and "E."; and the grand portico had on its summit gigantic equestrian statues of Charlemagne and Napoleon I. The towers and the whole exterior displayed banners and spread eagles, and the façade showed draperies of the Bonaparte green with golden bees thereon. It was within, however, that the work of the Imperialist stage-managers reached its highest point of success—and it must be remembered that the example set by the First Napoleon



## The Imperial Marriage 79

in the matter of scenic display was difficult to beat. The whole roof was hung with long-fringed streamers of pink, yellow, red, blue, and green. The gallery was swathed in crimson velvet and gold cloth, and the arms of France and Spain appeared on shields between each compartment. Crimson velvet covered the lower part of the pillars on both sides of the nave, while the upper parts were draped in blue cloth decorated with Imperial crowns, the initials "L." and "E.," and the arms of Bonaparte and Montijo, the latter with twenty-five quarterings. Fifteen thousand candles lighted the building, and rows of lustres hung in the aisles from end to end. The high altar had been moved for the occasion to the centre of the church, in front of the choir, which was not occupied (the orchestra of five hundred being placed by the organ) but was adorned with the arms and colours of the eighty-six departments of France. Above the high altar was a canopy of crimson velvet, lined with ermine, and suspended by golden cords; and facing it were faldstools, bearing the Imperial arms in gold, and two arm-chairs in crimson velvet. A double throne was set on a raised platform in the middle of the nave, carpeted with ermine and surmounted with a second crimson velvet canopy, over which was poised a colossal Imperial eagle.

It was about one o'clock, and the Cathedral

## 80 The Last Empress of the French

was packed with the representatives of every part of France and of all Europe when the Emperor, preceded by all the great officers of State, appeared leading the Empress by the hand, and followed by the Countess of Montijo, the Ladies-of-Honour, the Marshals and other chief dignitaries of the Empire. He was dressed in the uniform of a General Officer, with high boots over the knees, and wore the collar of the Legion of Honour which had been the First Napoleon's and that of the Golden Fleece which was said to have belonged to the Emperor Charles V. The Empress, who was seen to be very pale and nervous, was in white *épinglé* velvet, with a long train. On her head, over a veil of *pointe d'Alençon* lace, she had a diadem of brilliants and about her throat a pearl necklace. The service lasted about an hour. Napoleon had desired that the Pope should come to Paris to celebrate the wedding, but was unable to offer him sufficient concessions to make him repeat the journey of Pius VII. to Notre Dame. In default, the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Sibour, performed the ceremony. Until the blessing of the pieces of gold and the wedding ring, Napoleon and Eugénie remained on their throne in the nave. At this point they advanced to the altar, where they knelt under a strip of silver brocade held over their heads. After he had given his bene-

diction and presented the Holy Water, the Archbishop began the *Te Deum*, which the choir took up. He then conducted bride and bridegroom to the western door of Notre Dame, and the procession, resuming its order as before, rode back through the streets amid the cheers of the crowds, the sounds of drums and trumpets, and salvoes of artillery, while above all was heard the *bourdon* of the Cathedral which they had just left. When the gardens of the Tuileries was reached, there were found in waiting deputations from all the city corporations of France, marshalled with their banners, as well as bands of young girls representing the villages around Paris. As soon as the Imperial carriage drew up, these children in their ardent enthusiasm ran forward and began to fill it with flowers. So fast, indeed, was the shower of bouquets that the escort finally had to intervene to rescue the overwhelmed Emperor and Empress. Their Majesties were glad to escape within the Palace, but made their reappearance on the balcony of the Pavillon de l'Horloge to watch the deputations with their banners. Later in the day they proceeded to Saint-Cloud for the honeymoon, attended only by their immediate relatives, a few intimate friends, and the necessary officials.



# NAPOLEON III







**Napoleon III.**

From Painting by Winterhalter.



## CHAPTER V

### NAPOLEON III

No one would dispute, wrote Mérimée to the Countess of Montijo in March 1854, that she had married her children very well. Truly, as a match-maker, she had good reasons for pride. Her elder daughter, when only eighteen years old, wedded the best blood in Spain. The younger, if she was obliged to wait until she was twenty-seven, was the bride of an Emperor, not of a mere "Marquis of Santa Cruz," as Beyle used jestingly in Eugénie's childhood to prophesy that she would be. An Emperor, even an Imperial *parvenu*, was a prize beyond all hope, and it is easy to understand the feelings of the Spanish girl (of whom Mérimée tells in a letter to Mlle. Dacquin) who, when she heard how her countrywoman's residence in Paris had ended in her marriage to Napoleon, exclaimed "In this country a girl has no future!"

Apart from the value of his rank in the marriage market, he was certainly a very remarkable man whose wife Eugénie de Montijo had become. History's final verdict upon

## 86 The Last Empress of the French

Napoleon III. has yet to be heard. Perhaps no final and satisfactory verdict can ever be given. His public career commenced in ridicule, continued amid suspicion and contemptuous hostility, emerged into brilliant triumph, and closed in utter humiliation. For a long period after his death, although he still had warm eulogists among the few remaining faithful to him, he was in general trampled on and even spurned aside as despicable.<sup>1</sup> There have been signs of a reaction in his favour, but it looks as if the memory of his failure must always outweigh that of his success. Yet, at this distance in time, the success appears beyond contest more astounding than the failure. Probably neither the success nor the failure could have been his in any but a Latin country, possibly not in any country except France. The story of Napoleon III. revealed the strength and weakness not only of the man himself but also of his country. He seemed to know exactly how to take advantage of the peculiarities of the nation to which he belonged. His boast to his kinsman Count Tascher de la Pagerie, that he "knew men," is at least true to the extent of Cavour's judgment on him, that he was "*un homme habile qui connait son peuple et son*

<sup>1</sup> As late as 1905 a critic, reviewing a book on the subject of the Duke of Reichstadt (Napoleon II.), was able to write: "Napoleon I. we know, Napoleon III. we despise. . . ."

*temps.*"<sup>1</sup> Yet of his first forty years of life he spent in France none except seven in the nursery and six in prison at Ham, and he always struck foreign observers as anything rather than a typical Frenchman. The Prince Consort of England was not alone in seeing in him more that was German than French. Many, too, insisted on his English characteristics. Perhaps he was really the greatest cosmopolitan of his age.

The superficial traits of the Third Napoleon, as they impressed themselves on his contemporaries, are familiar to all who know his name. His masklike impenetrability of face; his habitual silence, coupled with a magically persuasive tongue, when he chose, which made one European statesman declare it to be dangerous to be in a room with him alone; his indolence and fatalism; his unceasing absorption in his theories and dreams; the excessive good nature which made his charity indiscriminately lavish and caused his anxious screening of culprits to excite suspicion against himself; and, until disease conquered him, his unwavering resistance to all advice from others—all these points have been insisted on with an abundant

<sup>1</sup> Sir M. E. Grant Duff "Leaves from a Diary," December 1860. France, for her part, failed to understand Napoleon III. The remark of Thiers bears the test of analysis, that she made two mistakes about him, first in thinking him a fool, and secondly in thinking him a genius.

88 The Last Empress of the French  
wealth of illustration. Perhaps it was his  
obstinate clinging to his own opinions which  
most of all remained in the minds of those who  
watched him. A fair sketch of him in the days  
of his presidency, written by de la Gueronnière,  
editor of *La Presse*, will serve to indicate how  
much this struck early observers :—

“Every day he presides in silence at his  
Council of Ministers. He listens to everything  
that is said, speaks but little, and never yields.  
With a phrase, brief and clear as an order of  
the day, he decides the most disputed points.  
That is the reason why Parliamentary Govern-  
ment is impossible with him. A Parliamentary  
Ministry would want to govern, and he would  
not consent to abdicate. . . . Does that in-  
flexible judgment constitute an active will?  
No. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte is endowed  
with an incontestable power of resistance, a  
*vis inertiae*; but what he lacks, in the very  
highest degree, is the power of initiative. He  
believes too much that the Empire is to be, and  
is apathetic. . . . He has freed himself from  
everyone, but has led no one after him. He is  
at present the undisputed head of the Govern-  
ment, but he is not the head of public opinion.  
He has, no doubt, behind him the many reminis-  
cences which his name arouses, much enthusiasm  
which his blood produces, many sympathies  
generated by his character, and many interests

reassured by his rule. But he has not under his hand those great currents of opinion which men of real strength create and direct, which bear along their fortunes with those of their country. Is this his fault? I think it is."

The Prince-President himself wrote to his cousin Prince Napoleon in 1849: "I receive daily the most contradictory counsel; but I follow only the dictates of my reason and my heart." This was how he justified his obstinacy. He saw clearly what course appealed to his own reason or his own heart. On the other hand, there were the widely divergent advices of those about him, in whose abilities he did not trust. Whereas his hostile critics saw in him a dislike of men superior to himself in talent, he attributed the isolation in which he stood in his rule of France to the fact that he could not find the men whom he wanted to put an end to that isolation. In 1855 he told Lord Cowley that it was his great misfortune that there were no men of capacity or character whose services he could command nor any men, if he could command them, in whom the public would place confidence. It is to be noted that Von Moltke, in a letter written while he was in attendance on the Crown Prince of Prussia in Paris in 1856, remarks how the French Emperor "suffers from a want of men of ability to support him." The want continued to the end of his reign. In

## 90 The Last Empress of the French

another chapter we shall see who were the men whom he succeeded in attracting to his service. That there were far abler Frenchmen at the time cannot be denied. But that they could have been induced to take service in his government is hardly possible, and to Napoleon III. that form of government seemed the only kind which could succeed at first. He set up the "Liberal Empire" at the end of 1869 when he knew that he must expect death soon. It was in agreement with his ideals, and he hoped that its establishment might secure his son's rule. A Liberal Empire was not possible in the Fifties, with memories of the Kingdom and Republic so recent. It required a greater man than Louis Napoleon to accomplish the double task of retaining the support of the provinces, his real strength, where every peasant had on his walls a picture of the Emperor and Empress, and of conciliating the intellectuals. He told the Duke of Newcastle, who was with Prince Albert at Boulogne in 1854, that, whereas preceding governments had tried to reign by the help of one million of the educated class, he claimed to hold the other twenty-nine millions. He did not, however, go to those twenty-nine millions for his assistants, as to a great extent his uncle had done, but continued to the end to make use of the tools which had come to his hand at first.

At the beginning, indeed, those tools served

him well, better than he deserved. After the ridiculous fiascos at Strasburg and Boulogne, the campaign which started when he reached Paris in September 1848, and carried him to the Tuileries in December 1853, was most cunningly planned and executed. But neither the credit of the engineering of the *Coup d'État* nor the blame of its ruthless carrying out seems to belong to Napoleon III. so much as to his supporters—Persigny, Mocquard, Morny, Fleury, and Saint-Arnaud. At Strasburg and Boulogne his attitude had been that of one who presents himself to Providence, of whose need of him he is convinced; in Paris his followers, more practically, set themselves to help the workings of Providence. They attained the end which they desired. Having attained it, they were not the right men to aid their master to rule the Empire which was thus his. But, persuaded that he could find no others,<sup>1</sup> he called upon them to perform tasks for which they were by no means fitted and endeavoured to correct their deficiencies by his own unremitting attention.

In such circumstances, the measure of his

<sup>1</sup> Or unable to shake them off, according to some critics who loved him but not his friends. It was roundly asserted by Madame Cornu, the Emperor's foster-sister, in conversation with Sir M. E. Grant Duff, that Napoleon ought to have drowned all those who helped him, immediately after the *Coup d'État*. "As he did not do so, he was ever afterwards held in a circle of iron by people who kept all but their own set away from him."

92    The Last Empress of the French achievement is no small one. The mere fact of historians admitting that, had he died, say, in 1865, he must have been accounted a successful ruler of France suggests that an altogether hostile verdict on account of the failures at the end of his reign must be unjust. What he did for Paris, for France, and for Europe in a dozen years remained good in spite of the evils which befell when he was slowly dying. If he is to be judged, it must be by the whole of his career, not merely as the Man of Sedan. And if he be thus judged by his whole work, there will be found much to be said for this dreamer who "did not know the difference between dreaming and thinking," this "tortuous schemer," who took neither France nor Europe into his confidence but, unaided at the start except by the equivocal sound of a great name, bent both to the acceptance of what he himself called the dictates of his reason and of his heart.

Whatever was his debt to the power of the Bonaparte name, Louis Napoleon certainly did not owe any of his success to looks inherited from the family. Indeed, it is difficult in his face to make out any of the Bonaparte features as we know them best, in portraits of the Great Emperor, for instance, of Jerome and his son, and, among the women, of Pauline and Mathilde. He was more of the Beauharnais type, and Hortense, though considered elegant and fascinating,



had a long nose and thick lips. Louis Napoleon, by the way he wore the hair on his face, concealed his mouth, and wisely ; for John Forster, describing him as he unexpectedly appeared, just after his escape from Ham, at a small dinner-party given by Lady Blessington at Gore House, writes : " Before or since I have never seen his face as it was then ; for he had shaved his moustaches as part of his disguise, and his lower and least pleasing features were completely exposed under the straggling stubble of hair beginning again to show itself." The familiar moustache and " imperial " concealed the defects of his lower face. But he suffered from the additional disadvantages of a body too small for his head and short legs, so that his appearance was often described as *mesquin* and his figure looked far less well on foot than on horseback. His chief charms were his eyes and his smile. The eyes were of a faded blue ; under drooping lids, they had an almost extinguished look, to use the words of Von Moltke. Napoleon's cousin and unwavering admirer, Countess Stéphanie de Tascher de la Pagerie, speaks of the eyes, in early days at Arenenberg, being " generally veiled, as if they looked inward," but adds that they " must have been eloquent in the language of love." His sleeping smile was celebrated by many writers and was said to be irresistible to women. It compensated for the less winning

## 94 The Last Empress of the French

manner of Napoleon the Silent, as his Court nicknamed him (the *doux ténébreux*, in his mother's more tender phrase), who repelled strangers by the cold mask which they could not pierce; and, when he chose to drop that mask and become animated, he could inspire enthusiasm and affection in men as well as women—and even fear in statesmen, as is mentioned above. Why did he, who could so charm and was universally admitted to be benevolent and kind-hearted, risk the charge of moroseness so often? Perhaps this was partly the effect of early failures on a sensitive disposition. But also he was noted for his uncommunicative ways in childhood. When a mere boy he was usually silent, gentle, and timid, though subject to occasional violent fits of temper, according to the testimony of his foster-sister. She knew, for she experienced the effects of that temper herself. Laughing at him one day because he, at the age of ten, was inspired by conversation on his uncle Napoleon to boast what he would do when he was a man, she suddenly found her wrist seized, with the exclamation “If you do not take that back, Hortense, I'll break your arm!” We never hear of any display of this passion in his later life, and it may be that his “mask” was the outward sign of the constant control which he kept over himself.

Having many qualities which might conduce

to a peaceful married life, Napoleon III. was unfortunately too much of a Bonaparte (and, it must be said, too much of a Beauharnais also) to keep faithful to a wedding vow. His father, Louis Bonaparte, had been an exception to the general looseness of his family's morals. But Hortense Beauharnais left at least one witness to her infidelity in the person of her illegitimate son, Morny. Napoleon III., according to a sympathetic biographer,<sup>1</sup> was a man who ought never to have married, since marriage soon killed his desire with its burden of an intimacy incompatible with his disposition, and he was bound to bring pain on whoever he married by turning to other affections. When he had made Eugénie de Montijo his wife, it was not in him to become an unkind husband; but neither was it in him to remain true. In the midst of their Court the Emperor never lacked temptation. Women, of notorious beauty, threw themselves in his way. Only such a wife as his uncle Jerome had found in Catherine of Würtemberg could be blind to the results of such a situation; and, if Napoleon III. was no King Jerome of Westphalia, neither was the Empress Eugénie a Queen Catherine. Doubtless the scandals of the very corrupt Court were reflected unduly on the Emperor who was always glad to hush things up to save the guilty. The malice of his

<sup>1</sup> M. Pierre de Lano.

96 The Last Empress of the French  
enemies put all the scandals, quick enough to  
grow without, in the forcing-house of their  
imagination. But it cannot be denied that her  
husband's unfaithfulness was a bitter element in  
the life of the Empress.

THE ORGANISATION  
OF A COURT

G



## CHAPTER VI

### THE ORGANISATION OF A COURT

DURING the early months of 1853 the Emperor's leisure time was fully employed in showing to his wife the attractive side of the position to which he had raised her. In his efforts to please her he could reckon upon the support of the masses; for in the matter of the Empress, as was said to be the case in public affairs, if the head of the body politic was against him, the limbs were with him. He had also the assistance of the official world which he had created. On the 9th February the Senate gave a ball and *fête* in the Luxembourg Palace and gardens in honour of Their Majesties. This entertainment had originally been fixed for the 25th January as a tribute from the Senate to the Emperor, but on the announcement of his engagement it had been postponed until after the honeymoon at Saint-Cloud. Another ball followed at the Palais Bourbon, the hosts being the Legislative Body. By visits to Sèvres and Versailles, too, the sovereigns showed themselves to their subjects in the neighbourhood of Paris, being excellently received by the

100 The Last Empress of the French crowd everywhere. Nevertheless, in spite of the magnificence of the wedding ceremony and the endeavours made to fix its occasion in the people's minds, as by the broadcast distribution of commemorative medals stamped with the heads of Napoleon and Eugénie, and, more notably still, by the pardon of over four thousand of those condemned to imprisonment at the time of the *Coup d'État*; in spite of the announcement in the *Moniteur* that of the sum of 250,000 francs in the "pocket-book" included in the Emperor's wedding present to his bride she had given 100,000 to maternity societies and the remainder for the foundation of new beds in the Hospital for Incurables; in spite of all such bids for popularity, it was impossible to conceal the signs of dissatisfaction in various classes of society. Rumours were rife in early February of great ministerial changes. It was said that only Fould and two of his colleagues were willing to remain in office. Saint-Arnaud actually retired from the Ministry of War very soon after the wedding. Drouyn de Lhuys was only prevented from resigning, even before Saint-Arnaud, by Eugénie's personal tact. He had already sent in his resignation, but being obliged to pay an official call on the Empress elect, he was met by her with an expression of thanks for having given sincere advice to his master. "The Emperor has betrayed me," he



exclaimed. "No, not betrayed you," replied Eugénie, "he told me the opinion of a faithful servant, which was the same as my own advice to him. I too told him to consult the interests of his throne." After this Drouyn de Lhuys (who was generally reckoned an able man and, in spite of great wealth, reputed to be honest) withdrew his resignation; and finally the War Minister was the only one to go.

The circulation of libels, which had disgraced the period between the engagement and the marriage, continued after Eugénie had become Empress. Anonymous verses lampooning her were seized in Paris, and the police were busy seeking the authors. A few obscure Belgians and Germans were arrested for circulating such attacks, and, what was more serious, a number of French Legitimists, some highly placed, were implicated. Eugénie, being the usurper's wife, was fair game for the unscrupulous among the Royalist party. Chivalry did not protect her, perhaps less than ever since she had been well known in Legitimist and Orleanist circles before her engagement and was, as Napoleon jestingly asserted, an Orleanist at heart. The chivalry at this time was shown chiefly in the humbler ranks of society, who readily adopted Napoleon's views concerning the Queen of Beauty whom he had won. Eugénie was indeed well fitted to sustain that title. One of the most flatter-

102 The Last Empress of the French

ing descriptions of her appearance is that given by the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher de la Pagerie, who now saw her for the first time. "The Empress Eugénie," she writes, "is of medium height, and no one can deny the delicate and distinguished harmony of her proportions. They might serve as a model to a sculptor for Hebe or Psyche, so true and fine are the lines. The lengthened oval of the face seemed to me a little marred by the fulness of the cheeks in the lower half, but the regularity of outline lost nothing thereby, and the profile was like a cameo. The forehead was high and delicately arched. The skin was so transparent that one could follow the blue lines of the veins in the temples. The almond-shaped eyes were divine in the mobility of their expression, but were more often languorous, very seldom lively. The nose was classic as a statue's, and a mouth of charming proportions finished off a lovely face."

Tributes to the Empress's looks are so plentiful in memoirs and other writings of the time that it would be tedious to collect them. Mention should be made, however, of that celebrated *révérence circulaire* in which she was supposed to show off to the best advantage the gracefulness of her carriage. The act has been thus described:—"She placed her feet firmly and then stood bending the upper part of her body back

## The Organisation of a Court 103

and bringing it forward again, with the easiest, prettiest movement from side to side, like a swan curving its neck: then, without turning, she slowly withdrew backwards to the doorway." With this elaborate curtsey she combined a smiling glance, which took in all present. So she was wont to retire always from a Court which watched with eager eyes her every action.

To the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher de la Pagerie mentioned above we owe a very interesting, if partial, account of Court life under the Second Empire. The author of "Mon Séjour aux Tuileries" was the Emperor's kinswoman on the Beauharnais side. After the Imperial wedding she was brought by her parents from their old home at Munich to live at the Tuileries. Her father, Count Tascher de la Pagerie, was, as has been recorded, Grand Master of the Household, and his son Charles First Chamberlain, to the Empress Eugénie. All three, with Charles's wife, had apartments assigned to them in the Tuileries, where also, beside the Emperor and Empress, lived the Duke of Bassano, Napoleon's Grand Chamberlain, and his wife, Eugénie's Lady-of-Honour. A certain amount of social life, therefore, was provided in the Palace, the Taschers entertaining on Wednesday and the Bassanos on Friday in every week. Until she instituted her *lundis*, which afterwards became so famous, Eugénie did not entertain in

her own name alone, but on Thursdays during the first year at the Tuileries she and the Emperor received visitors in the evening, and balls were given, ordinary and fancy-dress, varied in Lent by concerts, for which the best professional singers were engaged.

Nevertheless, it appears from numerous sources that dulness was the prevailing feature of the early days at the Tuileries of the new Empress, and that Court etiquette, which Napoleon III. was anxious to model as much as possible upon that of the First Empire, weighed heavily upon her. The chief trouble was that she could hardly be permitted to make any friends. She must not visit even the Taschers too frequently, although they lived in the same building and were relatives by marriage. Nor might she show preferences among the six ladies who waited on her in rotation, two at a time, throughout the year. The jealous eyes of women watching her and the anxiety of Napoleon to maintain a pomp that was almost theatrical, to give dignity to his Empire, combined to bind down wearisomely one accustomed in girlhood to free movement and unrestrained acquaintances. There is little wonder that she showed so much attachment to the one Spaniard whom she had in her household, her waiting woman Pepa, whom her enemies magnified later into a domestic tyrant and all but a ruler of her mistress's actions.

Pepa had been with her in Spain, when both were girls, and had an almost ferocious regard for Eugénie. In her capacity as guardian of the Empress's wardrobe she was most jealous and was reported to put the Imperial slippers in her pocket every morning in order that no one else should touch them but herself. A little, pale, irritable woman, starting at every noise or movement, she always thought herself to be dying but lived beyond the end of the Empire and managed, though credited with small intelligence, to save about a million francs by commissions from tradesmen to the Imperial household, etc. Eugénie entrusted her with her purse and found her a husband in an infantry officer named Pollet. As Pepa had a high idea of her own importance and rumour made her influential in her mistress's counsels, she was naturally disliked by the French members of the household; but it does not appear very blameworthy that the Empress should have clung to the one link with her native land that she was permitted to keep, the one person about her who was not hedged about with etiquette.

Concerning the stiff formality of the Court several memoir-writers give their testimony. The evidence of Lord Malmesbury is interesting. As an old friend of Louis Napoleon, whom he had known in Rome in 1829, had often met in London, and had visited at Ham, he dined with

106 The Last Empress of the French  
the Emperor and Empress at the Tuileries near  
the end of March 1853, sitting next to the  
Empress, whom he found "still" (at twenty-  
seven!) "very handsome, with a beautiful bust  
and shoulders and small hands and feet." After  
dinner he complains of the etiquette which  
obliged all the gentlemen to remain standing  
for two hours together. Malmesbury, however,  
had less reason to be bored than the rest, since  
both Emperor and Empress talked to him freely,  
Napoleon asking him among other things what  
he thought of his choice of a wife, and Eugénie  
questioning him concerning her husband's health.  
An amusing incident occurred, for the Emperor  
and Empress, having the custom, when they did  
not desire the whole table to understand them,  
of addressing one another in English (which  
both spoke well), did so on the present occasion,  
forgetting that one of their guests was English.  
They "laughed heartily at the mistake" when  
they discovered it.

To relieve the monotony of life Eugénie at  
length devised her Monday evening entertain-  
ments. Usually after dinner at the Tuileries,  
except on State occasions, all that followed was  
a move to the Salon d'Apollon, where the  
Emperor, standing like all the men present,  
either smoked a cigarette "in benevolent silence,"  
as it has been described, or else over the cigarettes,  
of which he was a great consumer, talked in a

corner with a politician or a general. Meanwhile with much vivacity (which may often have been entirely assumed) the Empress led the conversation among the rest of the company. Sometimes in desperation, it may be imagined, she would propose an informal dance, when one of the men would be set to turn the handle of a mechanical piano, of which some of the memoir-writers seem to have kept a lively if not fond recollection. Occasionally even Napoleon himself would stay to turn the handle, but more often within a quarter of an hour from the end of dinner he had slipped away already to his own rooms, either to put on some old clothes and devote himself to work and cigarettes until he went to bed or else to make just a fleeting reappearance at ten o'clock, when the Empress's tea-table was brought in. His final departure was greeted with a sigh of relief—for he represented etiquette—and conversation was able at last to turn to the personal gossip of the day, which in his presence was carefully avoided. At half-past eleven the Empress retired, but to the annoyance of her attendants, the unfriendly said, would often sit up in her own rooms for hours later.

The institution of the *lundis* caused a break in the monotony one day in each week. There seems to have been very little reason why these "Mondays" should have obtained such notoriety.

## 108 The Last Empress of the French

Those asked to them included the personal acquaintances of Emperor and Empress, and the invitation list ran to about five hundred names in all. As the guests arrived, the Empress received them in a tapestry-hung room leading to the Salon du Premier Consul. A small dance was in the early years the conclusion of the entertainment; later charades or *tableaux vivants* were frequent, under the supervision of Mérimée or Viollet-le-Duc. Games were played at times for the amusement of those present, and it is this feature which was so unfairly attacked by enemies of Napoleon and Eugénie. An American lady, Miss A. L. Bicknell, who was for nine years governess to the family of Tascher de la Pagerie at the Tuileries, says very truly: "The Emperor and Empress were exceedingly hospitable and kind hosts, anxious to amuse their guests; but, for this purpose, unfortunately, romping games were often chosen, which, though certainly undignified and ill suited to those beyond school years, had not, however, the character attributed to them by public report nor the licentious freedom believed in by the Faubourg Saint-Germain." The "belief" of the Faubourg Saint-Germain in its own tales may perhaps be questioned; it could not well make a crime out of hide-and-seek, blind-man's buff, and hunt-the-slipper, and therefore invented less innocent follies to represent as the pastimes of the Imperial guests. ,



## The Organisation of a Court 109

The suppers, too, which sometimes took place at the Tuileries at the close of an entertainment were made out to be midnight orgies. In reality, chocolate boiled by Pepa and a few cakes constituted the extent of the iniquity. In the whole library of abuse of the Imperial régime it would be impossible to find a more ridiculous chapter than that relating to the Empress's *lundis*. Eugénie's own apology is simple enough. "Do they find fault with our gayeties at the Tuileries?" she asked. "I must find some diversion for the poor Emperor, who is worried all day long with politics, and give him the chance of seeing some pretty women." Puerility was as hard a name as could be given to the entertainment at its worst. No doubt there was more room for attack on the characters of some of those invited. They were indeed similar characters to those which do not debar people from other society gatherings and other Courts.

The selection of those who were to be admitted to the intimacy of the Palace naturally fell rather to the Emperor than to his foreign bride, especially in the early days of their married life. Now Napoleon III. was confronted by one of the greatest difficulties of his reign when he came to organise Court life. Here the circumstance, of which he so often complained especially to English visitors with whom he was on terms of

110 The Last Empress of the French friendship, that he had no aristocracy, was his chief trouble. The old aristocracy of France stood aloof from his Court, not merely indifferent, but for the most part bitterly hostile and censorious. His marriage had made matters worse in this respect. While he was still only President of the Republic, his invitations to the Elysée receptions might be accepted. But when the Empire was proclaimed and an Empress installed, the Royalists banned him completely. Although he could dispense with their assistance in government and did not indeed ask for it, he could not so easily do without their decorative presence at Court to honour his wife. He was compelled to recruit that Court from the few of the old peerage whom sheer poverty and hopes of profit induced to desert Legitimism; from the *bourgeoisie*; from the capitalists with whom Morny's commercial enterprises brought him in contact; and from the crowd of foreigners in Paris. The number of "exotics" at her Court, especially a few years later, was made a ground of personal attack against the Empress Eugénie. This was scarcely fair, for she desired at once to second her husband's aims, to counteract the dulness which was always threatening to settle down on the Tuileries, and to prove to the sneerers that she was not so unfitted to play the Imperial hostess as they alleged. In the end, struggling to avoid insignificance and dulness, the

## The Organisation of a Court 111

Court gained a reputation for extravagance and frivolity. The theatrical display, which Napoleon knew well would appeal to his subjects, was very expensive to maintain. The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher exclaims, for instance, at the luxury of the costumes at the Compiègne hunting-parties, although she says that they were a perfect feast for the eyes, the Empress setting the example to all. Of course there were evils resulting from this "struggle of toilettes," since, as in all such cases, stories circulated about the way in which the ladies managed to pay for their elaborate wardrobes.

To gather together suitable feminine society at the Court proved even harder than to rally to the Government the men whom the Emperor wanted. The moral tone had been low under the Republic, and Napoleon's efforts to purify the circle which surrounded him were not crowned with great success. Both Greville and Malmesbury have left evidence on the point which may be looked on as more impartial than that of French contemporaries, either partisans or enemies of the Imperial rule. Greville finds the Court ladies at the end of 1854 "more *encanaillées* than ever." Malmesbury relates three years later how some English ladies who had just visited Compiègne had been amused and struck at the freedom in conversation and manners there, which was particularly remark-

112 The Last Empress of the French  
able in the Princess Mathilde. "Their forgetfulness of all *convenances*," he says, "is quite incredible, and in more than one instance excited the disgust of the Empress as well as of her guests." It is to be observed that at no time did trustworthy observers, writing about the Court, implicate the Empress in any way in the freedom of conduct and talk which provoked censure. It was her exceeding good-nature, which stands out in all accounts showing any real acquaintance with the scenes which they profess to describe, and an absence of haughtiness which prevented her from interfering to check, as it would have been better for her own sake to do, the liberty which those about her abused. In her anxiety to combine the characters of a good hostess and a popular sovereign, she erred no doubt on the side of over-indulgence toward the faults of her circle. She shared, too, to some extent the views about the freedom to be allowed to married women, as opposed to unmarried girls, of which her mother was a prominent illustration.<sup>1</sup> So, while she impressed people with the perfection of her manner as hostess and with her grace and charm as Empress, she had not the strength to make others observe the rules of conduct which she did not herself transgress.

<sup>1</sup> But Persigny told Malmesbury that the Empress objected to "vulgar persons" and prevented access to the Emperor (Memoirs, 13th April 1855).

## The Organisation of a Court 113

Apart from this good-nature which she carried to an excess, the Empress early gained a reputation for directness, impulsiveness, and a quick temper, coupled with a tenacity of purpose which almost equalled that of her husband but was less diplomatically veiled. The consequence was that some were inclined to forget the general amiability which she showed to them because of the occasional whims in which her persistence put them to inconvenience, and that she never inspired quite the affectionate regard which is so striking a feature in the attitude of Bonapartists who knew Napoleon III. intimately. It is true that the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher and Madame Carette, author of three books on the Tuileries under the Second Empire, are unstinted in their admiration of the Empress Eugénie; but many other Imperialists are ungallantly ready to abandon her to the wolves of Royalism or Republicanism, if they can thereby save Napoleon himself.



THE IMPERIAL FAMILY  
AND OTHERS









Prince Napoleon.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE IMPERIAL FAMILY AND OTHERS

A MOMENT of irritation such as he very rarely betrayed drove Napoleon III., when taunted by his uncle Jerome with having nothing of the First Napoleon about him, to reply: "I have his family." The retort, which has become famous, was well deserved. On another occasion, speaking of the family, he said: "I shall forget *them* in the affection of others." But Louis Napoleon had no opportunity of forgetting that he had Bonapartes about him. He can have been under no misapprehension as to their regard for him, since they took little trouble to conceal its nature. He was their source of power. If he was to be worshipped, it was with the worship of the savage for a fetish which, when it does not answer prayers, is abused and maltreated. Of all the lot, those loyal to him were only the Princess Mathilde and one or two not very important distant connections. Jerome, ex-King of Westphalia, old soldier of Waterloo (as he liked to call himself), and superannuated lady-killer (as others rather regarded him), did not trouble his nephew much. He had rallied to

him on the morning of the *Coup d'État*, when he divined that it would succeed, and in spite of the blow which the Spanish marriage had dealt to his family pride, was content to draw his salary of 45,000 francs as Governor of the Invalides and his pay as General. He was now too old and too insignificant to be dangerous. His remaining years he devoted mainly to the cultivation of his last love affair and to the superintendence of his memoirs.

If Jerome was harmless, his son Napoleon Jerome, usually known in history as Prince Napoleon, was distinctly dangerous to his cousin. This "most prodigiously intelligent and most prodigiously vicious man that ever lived," as his father's aide-de-camp Baron du Casse calls him, was indirectly one of the Emperor's greatest enemies, inasmuch as he was the most unpopular member of the Imperial family and by his vile private life and Red Republican views gave an easy handle to opponents of the Empire. Louis Napoleon, who was fourteen years his senior, never forgot the days at Arenenberg when he had helped Mathilde's brother in his mathematics, and continued always to demonstrate affection toward an unresponsive object. Once indeed he was recorded to have lost patience with him entirely, at the first interview after Prince Napoleon's speech in 1861 which roused the anger or derision of all parties in France and

provoked the crushing answer of the Duke of Aumale. On that occasion the Emperor raised his voice so loud in anger as to be heard in adjoining rooms. Such an effect had this on Prince Napoleon that he hastened back to his home in the Palais Royal and smashed an expensive Sèvres vase. He might, it is true, claim good Napoleonic precedent for smashing ornaments; but Napoleon I. had done so to exhort a treaty from unwilling diplomatists, not merely to relieve his temper.

In 1853, however, the relations between the cousins were very friendly. The "Prince of the Mountain"—so the most revolutionary of the Bonapartes was nicknamed at this time—had forgotten his own strenuous opposition to the *Coup d'État* in his pleasure at being decreed an Imperial Highness, like his father and his sister, in December 1852. On New Year's Day it was known that he had a private conversation of over half-an-hour's duration with the Emperor, in the course of which the latter took off his own ribbon of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour and put it on the Prince. It is allowable to suppose that the Emperor thus prepared the way for the announcement of his engagement, which must be a severe blow to one who was at present but one step from the throne. Prince Napoleon's amiability did not last long. There is a serious under-statement of

120 The Last Empress of the French

the case when Baron Imbert de Saint-Amand, for instance, makes the difference between the cousins amount merely to a political one between the Right and Left parties at Court, Prince Napoleon leading the Left and the Emperor himself the Right. It is true that the two had convictions in common, such as a firm belief in the principle of nationalities and a union of the cult of Napoleon I. with respect for democracy. But, in personal matters, if Napoleon "felt like an elder brother to Prince Napoleon," as the Baron says, the latter scarcely made a brotherly return. As for the relations between the Empress Eugénie and Prince Napoleon, it was not long before their hostility was barely concealed. The lapse of time made matters worse. After his omission to challenge the Duke of Aumale in 1861, Eugénie turned her back on him the first time they met. She could not understand the code of honour which was content with an epigram in place of an appeal to sword or pistol, and therein she shared the views of Society and the Army. Prince Napoleon anticipated many of the ideas of modern France, not only as regards anti-militarism but also in his hostility to the clericals and his desire to see, as he said, "popular education without limits, free from the control of the religious congregations who would impose on us the bigotry of the Middle Ages." It was impossible to disregard his views, for the

## The Imperial Family and Others 121

Prince was an eloquent speaker and delighted in braving public opinion. How could there be sympathy between him and one who was "a descendant of the Cid" and a devotee of the Spanish type?

The Princess Mathilde, sister of this *enfant terrible* of the Imperial family, was perhaps to the Empress as much of a terror as her brother. Nor can it be denied that Eugénie had good grounds for objection to her cousin by marriage. Yet of all the contemporary Bonapartes the Princess Mathilde is perhaps the most attractive figure. Morny, who passed for the wit of the Court, called her "the man of the family"—a not altogether undeserved title, for had she turned her attention to politics rather than to art and letters she must have influenced the affairs of her country. As it was, she had something to do with Louis Napoleon's rise to power, since she is said to have put both her money and her advice at his disposal in 1848-52. Owing to the Tsar Nicholas having insisted that her husband Demidoff should make her a large allowance, she was wealthy; and her brains were beyond dispute. Before the Imperial marriage, she was the chief lady of the State and wielded considerable influence over her cousin as well as occupied a high place in his affections. In appearance she was very striking and could claim to be the best-looking woman of the family since

122 The Last Empress of the French  
Pauline, *la belle des belles*. The following is  
Sainte-Beuve's description of her, published after  
his death :—

“The Princess has a lofty, noble forehead, and  
and her light golden hair, leaving uncovered on  
either side her broad pure temples, is bound in  
wavy masses on the full, finely-shaped neck.  
Her eyes, which are well set, are expressive  
rather than large; they gleam under the influ-  
ence of the thought of the moment and are not  
of the kind which can feign or conceal. The  
whole face displays nobility and dignity, and,  
as soon as it lights up, grace united to power,  
frankness, and goodness; at times, too, it ex-  
presses fire and passion. The head, so well  
poised and carried with such dignity, rises up  
from a dazzling and magnificent bust and is  
joined to shoulders of statuesque smoothness  
and perfection.”

A certain heaviness which her portraits betray  
is hardly surprising, seeing that her mother  
inherited stoutness from her father, Frederick of  
Württemberg, physically at least the greatest  
king in Europe.

The Princess Mathilde's beauty, talent, and  
wealth combined made her a welcome friend to  
the men of letters whose society she sought, and  
Sainte-Beuve, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt,  
Gautier and Taine were among her circle. Not  
only writers, but painters, musicians, diplo-



## The Imperial Family and Others 123

matists, politicians, financiers, etc., are described as flocking on Sundays and Tuesdays to her house, where a staircase fit for an Eastern palace, hung with cascades of Chinese silk draperies and guarded by jewelled peacocks trailing their tails along the balusters, led up to rooms full of Old Masters, statuary, and Oriental ware. Here her hospitality was freely dispensed to men of talent, whom she treated as a sister might treat her brothers. The story is well known—it is told by De Goncourt himself—how one day when Edmond de Goncourt had spoken rudely to her before her guests and, becoming penitent, had apologised to her with tears in his eyes, she threw her arms about him, kissed him on both cheeks, and cried: “Of course I forgive you. You know how I am attached to you. I too have been nervous and upset lately.” It was not, however, merely an amiable eccentricity of this kind which laid her open to the attacks of enemies. Her freedom of language even (wherein she approached her brother, though she was more witty where he was more coarse) was not her worst point. Her standard of morality might be called Bohemian and was certainly characteristically Napoleonic. She had a grievance against the profligate, Demidoff; mitigated, it is true, by the fact that he was obliged by the Tsar to settle on her 200,000 francs a year. But her own conduct

## 124 The Last Empress of the French

after the separation was loose, and her notorious relations with the good-looking young sculptor, Count Nieuwerkerke,<sup>1</sup> were not her only lapse from a by no means rigid standard which Court society was supposed to observe.

In the rest of the Imperial family (Bonaparte and Beauharnais), of which the Taschers, Cameratas, Caninos, Murats, and Mouchys represented the legitimate branches, Morny and Walewski the left-hand offshoots, the bad preponderated over the good. Count Louis Tascher de la Pagerie, a first cousin of the Empress Josephine, was an amiable old man and a devoted adherent of the dynasty, in whom Napoleon III. reposed great confidence, as he showed by his insistence that he should accept the control of the Empress Eugénie's household. The Count had married the daughter of one of the Princes of the Holy Roman Empire "mediatised" by Napoleon I., Amélie von der Leyen, who lost her mother in the terrible fire at the Austrian Ambassador's ball in Paris. Their son Charles, First Chamberlain to the

<sup>1</sup> Nieuwerkerke was the unintentional cause of Edmond About's disgrace with the Princess. Invited to dinner and being the first guest to arrive, About was talking to his hostess when the Count appeared. "Go away, you jealous man," said About. The Princess immediately rose, rang the bell, and told her servant to take M. About to his carriage, as he was not dining with her that night.

Empress, was known as the Duc de Tascher de la Pagerie, being permitted to take his rank from the late Duke of Dalberg, his mother's uncle, Prince-Primate of Germany. Duke Charles de Tascher, represented by his critics as a mere buffoon, did not live long enough to do any harm. His sister Stéphanie, who has already been mentioned as author of the book "Mon Séjour aux Tuileries," reveals herself therein as an estimable and intelligent lady with a capacity for amazingly lenient judgment concerning aristocratic peccadillos.<sup>1</sup>

Among the lesser members of the family, the young Duchess of Mouchy, born Anna Murat, was singled out by the Empress as a lifelong friend in France and in exile. Even the bitterest anti-Bonapartists seem to have spared her from the general attack. The head of the Murats was considered by the Emperor himself too blackguardly a character to support in his claims to the throne of Naples when the crimes of "Bomba" made his subject dream of a Muratist restoration. Prince Pierre Bonaparte was about as bad, and he dealt the dynasty a very serious blow at the end of the reign when he killed the journalist calling himself Victor Noir, bringing a challenge for a duel to the Prince's house at Auteuil.

<sup>1</sup> Even in Narvaez she detected an "Andalusian *grandezza*," which hardly seems to have struck others.

## 126 The Last Empress of the French

Of the Empress Eugénie's own family, the visitors to Court included her mother and the Duke and Duchess of Alba. The Countess of Montijo was not a frequent guest. The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher, though an admirer of her, thinks that she lacked sufficient *savoir-faire* and dignity for her position and leaves it in doubt whether she kept away from the French Court because the Emperor wished it or because she preferred Spain and her elder daughter's society. Mérimée, whom to his wife's delight Napoleon made a Senator, wrote to the Countess constantly to tell her how admirably Eugénie "*faisait son métier*" and served as a kind of official postman between mother and daughter. Those who were less blinded than Mérimée by the Montijo charms did not hesitate to say that Napoleon discouraged visits from his mother-in-law. He expected from her a restraint which she had never shown before she became mother of an Empress. The effect was to depress her volatile spirits, to make her tearful, and also to lead her to contract expenses in Paris the extent of which the Emperor learnt when the bills came in to the Tuileries. He then put a stop to her credit. Nor did he relish the Spanish piety which made her, as soon as she reached her daughter's palace, ask whether Napoleon stood well with *Le Bon Dieu* and *la Sainte Vierge* and continued to treat them properly. He preferred

her society, therefore, in moderation. She left for Spain two months after the wedding, escorted by Mérimée as far as Poitiers and adjured by him to think now about living for herself and to try to become *un peu egoïste*; and we hear little of her again except at the birth of the Prince Imperial.

The Duchess of Alba, on the other hand, with her husband and children, was always a welcome visitor to Paris. The tender affection between the two sisters made the families quite harmonious, and the Albas spent the winter regularly with Eugénie and Napoleon. The Empress had just had the Hotel d'Albe built for her sister when Francisca died in 1860, a blow which for the time completely crushed Eugénie's spirits. She took Francisca's two daughters under her protection then, and endeavoured to fill for them the place of their mother whom she had loved so well. So far did she succeed that death alone was able to break the warm friendship between aunt and nieces.

In the picture of the Court of the Second Empire as it appears in memoirs of the day, a very prominent position is taken by two illegitimate connections of the Emperor, his half-brother Morny and his cousin Walewski. Men of very different stamp, the two had great weight in his councils and had as much to do with shaping the external policy of France as

128 The Last Empress of the French  
anyone except Napoleon himself. Morny deserves first place, not as the greater man but as the stronger personality. He has succeeded in establishing for himself a sure title to the unenviable name of evil genius of the Second Empire.

Charles - Auguste - Louis - Joseph, Duc de Morny, was the result of the relations of Queen Hortense with General de Flahault de la Billarderie, aide-de-camp in turn to Murat, Berthier, and Napoleon I. He was born in Paris in December 1811, registered as the son of an obliging person called Demorny, and though recognised by neither parent, was brought up by his father's mother, the Marquise de Souza, whose first husband, the Comte de Flahault, was executed during the Terror. Entering the Army, he served in Algeria under the Duke of Orleans, and gained a decoration for saving the life of General Trézel. He was only twenty-seven when he threw up his commission and went into commercial life. Herein he showed great talent and made money rapidly by beet-sugar manufacturing and other enterprises. In 1842 he took up politics as a follower of Guizot, but after becoming deputy he was driven by the fall of Louis Philippe to London. Here for the first time he met that other exile Louis Napoleon, who had only learnt of his brother's existence through the record which their joint mother had

## The Imperial Family and Others 129

left to him on her death. Morny continued Orleanist in sympathy when he returned to France in 1849, but he joined the Prince-President's Cabinet as Minister of the Interior and with Saint-Arnaud and Mocquard formed one of the celebrated council on the night before the *Coup d'État*. A shadow of principle apparently clung to him, since he resigned his office in consequence of the confiscation of the Orleanist property by the decree of the 22nd January. But his adhesion to the Empire caused him to be hated nevertheless by his former friends. Greville tells a story of a party at Lord Holland's house in Paris in 1856, when all the ladies present were Orleanists. Morny and Flahault, arriving late, entered the room together, whereupon every lady got up and left. His rewards, however, amply compensated him for the hatred of his old associates. Twelve years in the Cabinet of the Emperor, broken only by a magnificent mission in Russia, brought him fame and wealth which no foolish observance of principles could have made his.

It is not so much Morny the Minister who makes the impressive figure in the chronicles of his contemporaries as Morny the splendid man of fashion, butterflying, as the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher expresses it, about the Court of Napoleon; Morny the king of elegance and good tone, the living picture of the *grands seigneurs*

130 The Last Empress of the French of old, reminding his admirers of a marquis of the time of Louis XV., and generally envied as being at once brilliant and happy. With the "sweet and nonchalant seductiveness of his creole mother and the chivalrous and polished manners of his father," he was, according to the Countess Stéphanie again, one of those who compel themselves to be talked about—sometimes well, sometimes ill—and so prove their uncommon stamp. That he was at the same time an unscrupulous ruffian is lost sight of in the splendour of the picture; or, rather, it is a side of his character which never enters in the estimates of the dazzled crowd of those privileged to describe him. Yet the evidence is plentiful that this glorious Morny was the corruptest of the whole gang which surrounded the Emperor and abused his good-nature and dislike of scandals. Morny never asked his brother for money, said his worshippers. This was true: he never asked, he took the money, by every underhand means which his power made possible and his business acuteness made easy to him. There was no reason for him to hurt his pride by begging when so many pockets were within reach of his hand.

Perhaps the summit of Morny's magnificence was coincident with what has been called his apotheosis as a statesman, when he went to St Petersburg in 1856 as Ambassador Extraordinary



## The Imperial Family and Others 131

at the coronation of the Tsar Alexander. From St Petersburg to Paris came back wonderful stories of his conquest of the Russian capital. Enthusiasts for the Dual Alliance are entitled to look upon Morny as one of its earliest champions. His campaign, however, was more social than diplomatic, and he created a great sensation with his splendid carriage emblazoned on the panels with the *hortensia* flower over the motto "*Tace sed memento!*" On the subject of his mother's indiscretion (the discovery of which had cut Louis Napoleon to the heart), even his friends thought Morny's taste questionable; the Countess Stéphanie suggests that he might have shown more respect to Queen Hortense by keeping silence on the mystery of his birth. His display gained its end. In St Petersburg he won the hand of the Princess Troubetskoi, a reputed daughter of the late Tsar Nicholas. The match inspired him to this atrocious jest: "I am a queen's son and an emperor's brother, and I have married an emperor's daughter. It is all quite natural." The Duchess of Morny was one of the fairest of Russians, so pale indeed that she obtained at the French Court the nickname of the "White Mouse." She appears to have impressed people chiefly by her evil temper.

To Morny's reputation as a wit allusion has already been made. One epigram at least is recorded about him. His former leader Guizot

132 The Last Empress of the French said to him: "You are the only man clever enough to upset the Empire, and you will never be foolish enough to do it." Morny made no attempt to upset the Empire, which was so profitable to himself, but by his character he did his best to disgrace it. Victor Hugo's sketch of him in "L'Histoire d'un Crime" is naturally not an unprejudiced statement, but it is hardly unjust.<sup>1</sup> He had, according to Hugo, the manners of a man of the world and the morals of a teetotum. "He combined a certain liberty of ideas with a readiness to accept useful crimes; was dissipated, yet well concentrated, ugly, good-humoured, ferocious, well-dressed, fearless; willing to leave under lock and key a brother in prison but willing to risk his head for a brother on the throne; conscienceless, irreproachably elegant, infamous and amiable—at need, a perfect Duke."

A more creditable specimen of the illegitimate section of the Imperial house was Count Florian-Alexandre-Joseph-Colonna Walewski, son of Napoleon Bonaparte and the beautiful and patriotic Countess Marie Walewski, to whom Napoleon after one chance meeting wrote "I have seen you only, I admired you only, I de-

<sup>1</sup> Except in calling him ugly. Morny had a distinct resemblance to his half-brother, but was taller and had better features. He had the same charm of voice, but he lacked the grave and pensive look which was admired in Louis Napoleon.

## The Imperial Family and Others 133

sire you only," and whom he forced, despite a prolonged refusal, to sacrifice her honour as a wife for her country's sake. A little older than Morny, Walewski was born at Walewice in Poland, in May 1810, and brought by his mother to Paris. He was also taken by her on her mysterious visit to Elba, when she and he were supposed at first to be Marie Louise and the little King of Rome. Brought up at Geneva and going to France after his mother's death, he was called away to help the cause of Polish freedom. In pursuance of his efforts for his native country he was in London in 1831, when Lord Malmesbury recalls meeting him, "a very handsome and pleasing young man, being a softened likeness of his father." After the Polish ruin Walewski returned to France, becoming naturalised late in 1833, and entering a hussar regiment. Like Morny, he was attached to the Duke of Orleans and sympathised with the policy of Guizot and Thiers. He only remained in the Army four years and, after a short and unsuccessful career as a dramatist, went in for diplomacy. The year 1848 found him representing France at Buenos Ayres, and after he had come back to join the President's party, he was sent in succession to Florence, Naples, Madrid, and London. In London he made a popular and successful ambassador, and in the spring of 1854 he was recalled to Paris to be rewarded

134 The Last Empress of the French with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His religious convictions, however, made it impossible for him to accept Napoleon's Papal policy and, though he retained his portfolio through the war with Italy, he resigned next year, while remaining a privy councillor. His Russian sympathies in 1855-56 seem to have alienated some of his English critics, but Malmesbury on his death speaks of him as "an agreeable and perfect gentleman." Greville, on the other hand, calls him a corrupt jobber and gives a letter from Lord Greville, according to whom Walewski is "an adventurer, a needy speculator, without honour, conscience, or truth, and utterly unfit both as to his character and his capacity for such an office as he holds."<sup>1</sup> It was commonly believed in England that Walewski and the Rothschilds made much money on the London Stock Exchange by the use of early secret intelligence of peace between Russia and the Allies. But Walewski at least died leaving very little money, which might be considered evidence in favour of his integrity, if it were not for the positive charges against him by the undoubtedly honest Persigny.

Personally Count Walewski was considered less fascinating than Morny by the Court, and particularly the ladies, of the Second Empire.

<sup>1</sup> *Sc.* the Foreign Office. This letter was written in January 1856.

## The Imperial Family and Others 135

Although also a man of the world, he was graver and less flashy. He escaped therefore, for the most part, the heritage of anecdotes which fell to Morny. One, however, is told to his credit. He did not imitate Morny in flaunting his origin. A lady once exclaimed in his hearing: "How like his father!" Walewski turned to her and said coldly: "I did not know, madame, that you were acquainted with the late Count Walewski." He married twice, first a daughter of Lord Sandwich, who died young; and then the Contessa Ricci, niece of Prince Joseph Poniatowski and a descendant of Macchiavelli. Madame Walewski, who is described as amiable, graceful, and quiet, had considerable influence with Napoleon III., from which scandalmongers drew their deductions. The only known instances of her exerting her influence are when her husband's position was in danger; and, in spite of the fact that he had a *liaison* with the actress Rachel, of which the result was a son, husband and wife remained attached. Walewski's death in 1868 followed an attack of apoplexy at Strasburg brought on by helping to carry upstairs in a chair, his wife, who was ill at the time.

It would be outside the scope of this book to describe the men who were associates with Morny and Walewski in the administration of Napoleon III. Two, however, demand a little more than the later incidental reference which

136 The Last Empress of the French  
may suffice for the rest. Both Persigny and Fleury, without being exceptional men, were at least interesting figures in their day. Unlike the other personages mentioned in this chapter, neither of them owed his fortune to aristocratic lineage, legitimate or illegitimate. Persigny, though he wrote himself Fialin de Persigny, was born plain Victor Fialin, and was the son of an undistinguished Napoleonic officer. He began as a Royalist and was in Louis Philippe's Army, but he is said to have caught the Bonapartist infection quite suddenly after reading the "Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène" in 1834. Having done so, he attached himself to the person of the heir of the Bonapartes and was implicated in the Strasburg attempt, being acquitted with the rest of the band after Louis Napoleon had been shipped off to America. He joined the pretender in England and was his page at the celebrated Eglinton Tourney. He supported him, too, in a more practical way, for when Napoleon published his "Idées Napoléoniennes" in 1840, Persigny wrote his "Visite au Prince Louis," a warm eulogy of the Prince and his theories. Accompanying his leader to Boulogne in August of the same year, he was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. When he was once more free, he set to work in earnest to restore the Empire, in the inevitability of which he had even more faith than Napoleon himself.

## The Imperial Family and Others 137

Morny's Orleanist scruples in January 1852 left the Ministry of the Interior open to Persigny, who used it well to organise Imperialist demonstrations all over Southern France during the Prince-President's tour. Persigny's faith and his bold scheming were rewarded by the sight of a Bonaparte on the throne again. He was made a Count by the Emperor, who also gave him a present of 500,000 francs on the occasion of his wedding with the granddaughter of Marshal Ney—an extraordinary woman, twenty-four years his junior, who openly sulked when there was a better-looking woman in the same room as her husband and could not conceal from public view her disagreements with him while living at the Embassy in London.

Persigny was by far the most honest of the Emperor's advisers; according to some, the one honest man among them. With his honesty he united an impulsive and hot-headed disposition and a blustering manner. Slavishly devoted as he was to Napoleon, he was frank, familiar, and often rude to his master. Never concealing his disapproval at the time of the Spanish marriage, he said to the Emperor a few years later: "You are like me in allowing yourself to be ruled by your wife. But I only sacrifice my fortune for the sake of peace. You endanger the best interests of yourself, your son, and the whole country." He never hesitated to make violent

138 The Last Empress of the French scenes in the Emperor's presence. On one occasion, annoyed at Napoleon's theories concerning Liberal government, Persigny suddenly sprang up and cried: "Oh, I have been deceived, deceived!" "In what, Persigny?" asked the Emperor. "In my belief in you, sire," answered Persigny brutally. Napoleon turned pale and uttered sadly one word only — "Persigny!" Crying, "Forgive me!" Persigny threw himself into the Emperor's arms. It is a curious story, and illustrates well both the personal power of Napoleon over his followers and the character of Persigny's devotion.

Fleury, though like Persigny in owing his career to his talents, not his birth, was more of the type of Morny. Of charming manners, witty, courageous, and good-looking, he was a favourite with most. But he was a better man than Morny and a loyal friend of the Emperor. His rise was rapid, for he enlisted at the age of twenty-two in the Spahis in Algeria and, after gaining his commission and being mentioned five times for bravery, left Africa in 1848 as *chef d'escadron*. Napoleon singled him out as a valuable adherent and took his advice in the selection of Saint-Arnaud as the general for the *Coup d'État*. On the foundation of the Empire Fleury was made Grand Equerry to the Emperor and in 1856, nineteen years after he had entered the Army as a private, he became a general.



## The Imperial Family and Others 139

Unfortunately he did not get on with the Empress, who was generally credited with having suggested his appointment as Ambassador to Russia in 1869, which exiled him from Court. He was still at St Petersburg when the Franco-Prussian War broke out, in spite of his urgent requests to Napoleon to recall him, and so there was one sincere friend the less at the side of the Emperor when he most needed such.

It may seem that this chapter has very little to do with the history of the Empress Eugénie. To appreciate her position as Empress, however, it is necessary to know something of the most prominent people with whom she was brought in contact. The characters of the Imperial family had certainly a bearing on her happiness and comfort as wife of Napoleon III. With his leading statesmen she came into constantly closer relations as time went on. Her general attitude toward them can only be described as one of hostility. She did not like Walewski nor Morny nor even the less obtrusive Rouher, whose political views were not very dissimilar from her own. She was jealous of their influence with the Emperor. Still less liking had she for Persigny or Fleury. She could hardly be expected to look with friendly eyes on Persigny, who continued to repeat to her husband that he had made a great mistake in marrying her. Fleury offended her both by his power with

140 The Last Empress of the French  
Napoleon and by his liberalism of views. After his removal to Russia she is reported to have observed: "Now I shall have so much influence over the Emperor that he will be unable to do anything without my knowledge." Whether she actually uttered these words or not, they may at least be taken as fairly representing her attitude. That the Emperor ought to have no secrets from her was her firm opinion, and as she imbibed a taste for politics she endeavoured to apply the rule in this sphere too. Although Napoleon never conceded the point, even when most encouraging his wife to play her part in public affairs (as may be seen from his secret dealings with Ollivier before setting up his last Ministry), the Empress on her side never ceased her struggles.

PALACE LIFE



## CHAPTER VIII

### PALACE LIFE

IN the first year of their married life Napoleon and Eugénie established the system which, with slight variations, they followed during the rest of the reign with regard to residence in their different homes; leaving the Tuileries for Saint-Cloud in May, spending the greater part of the summer by the sea, going to Compiègne and Fontainebleau in the autumn, and returning to Paris for the winter season. Owing to the arising of the question of the "Holy Places" and the consequent discussions between France and England, it was not until nearly the end of May that a move was made to Saint-Cloud, the palace whose beauty had once prompted Blücher to remark to Metternich, discussing there Napoleon's ruin in Russia: "A man must be a fool to run off to Moscow when he has all this at home!" The Third Napoleon was disposed to agree with Blücher's verdict; at least he preferred Saint-Cloud and its park to any other of his homes. Growing roses, making rustic seats to put in suitable spots, and strolling about with his dog—such is not the usual picture of

144 The Last Empress of the French Napoleon III. in history; yet it truly represents at least an aspect of his strangely blended personality.

The Emperor and Empress received guests regularly at Saint-Cloud as at their other residences, but owing to the more formal and official character of their house-parties here we do not read so much about them as about those at Compiègne or Fontainebleau. It was at these two places, and especially at Compiègne, that the hospitality of the Empire was chiefly remembered. For both Eugénie herself drew up the list of guests, who were divided into "series" of a week each, selected as far as possible according to their tastes and harmony of disposition.

As there was a general similarity in the plan of entertainment at Compiègne, Fontainebleau, and Saint-Cloud, it will suffice to refer to the first visit of the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher to Compiègne to give an idea of all. The guests were met on arrival at the station by the Imperial carriage and conveyed to the Palace, where, between rows of liveried lackeys and past doors all guarded by one of the *Cent Gardes*, each was taken to the room assigned. The Countess was rather shocked at a painting of an almost life-size mythological figure "without a single garment," but she had otherwise no complaint to make against her quarters. At 7.30 dinner took place, being excellent in quality,

perfect in service, accompanied by a regimental band, and lasting about an hour. After dinner proceedings were very much like what they were at the Tuileries on other than State occasions. There was a mechanical piano, like an improved street-organ, "which at least made a noise good enough for the dancing of those who had spent an afternoon riding down an unhappy stag." There was a stage in the chateau, on which charades could be played, while sometimes dinner was merely followed by general conversation until bedtime. In the mornings the guests were free to do what they liked until midday *déjeuner*. After this, if there was not hunting or shooting, there might be a walk in the woods or a drive to the ten-mile distant castle of Pierrefonds, restored by the architect Viollet-le-Duc at a cost of 5,000,000 francs. The ladies would appear in short walking skirts and feathered cavalier hats, trimmed with black lace. There is a simple sound about this, but we have already heard of the "struggle of toilettes" at Compiègne, and from other sources we learn that as many as fifteen new dresses were thought necessary by ladies accepting the Imperial hospitality.

The Compiègne visit of Napoleon and Eugénie was for a month each autumn, and this permitted the entertainment of four lots of guests. There was far from being merely a collection of fashion-

146 The Last Empress of the French  
able people. Nearly all the most distinguished Frenchmen of the day in literature, art, science, etc., and many foreigners were included in the invitations, and their surroundings were made as congenial as possible. If they were occasionally bored, it was not by being forced into frivolity against their will. In the year of the Countess Stéphanie's first visit, the four series were the Spanish set, the *camp des bourgeois*, the Aristocrats, and (she suggests the title, being one of them) the Inevitables. The *bourgeois* were mostly young married women, the great supporters of dances, distinguished for looks and liveliness. The Aristocrats were partly such of the old *noblesse* as were reconciled to the Empire, partly the Bonapartist nobility, and included also distinguished foreigners. As for the Inevitables, the name requires no more explanation than that of the Spanish set. But some of the Aristocrats remained over from the previous week to leaven the fourth series. Such were the Cowleys, the Duchess of Manchester, and some other English visitors.

As may be imagined, the last accusation that could be made against such gatherings was that they were not proper. Yet "what has not been said against the Compiègne and Fontainebleau series?" exclaims the Countess. Judged from her description, they may well have been very dull at times. A scandal might have been a



welcome change. Day followed day with little variation except such as was caused by the weather, and week was much like week, save that the Aristocrats and the men of letters or science did not dance to the same extent as the *camp des bourgeois*. In the less formal weeks, also, in later years at least, the same childish games were played as were popular at the Empress's *lundis*.

At Fontainebleau, the First Napoleon's best loved home, though it was not so favoured by its present owners as Compiègne, the frivolous spirit seems to have been more to the front. It is here that we are told of the Empress gathering her skirts about her and sliding down a sandbank, calling "Follow your leader!" promptly imitated by all her suite. Here, too, she liked to go to the annual fair without ceremony, and even the Emperor would do the same. In other respects the Fontainebleau visit was like a continuation of that to Compiègne, but hunting formed a greater part of the daily entertainment.

The Court did not, during the first year of the Imperial marriage, go to Biarritz. In 1854 a visit was paid during July. After this it became Eugénie's regular custom to spend September there, while Napoleon, who did not care for the place, was often engaged elsewhere in military or political work. The Empress, apart from

## 148 The Last Empress of the French

what pleasant recollections she carried of earlier days at Biarritz, enjoyed the opportunity of seeing more Spanish society and of making short trips across the frontier, picknicking in Pyrenean valleys, talking to the peasants, and breathing the air of her native land. For her benefit the Villa Eugénie was built on a rocky platform opposite the town, bearing its name proudly upon its front toward the land. The Villa has been described as more like a barracks than a palace, but Mérimée writes glowingly about the hospitality there. "There is not a castle in France or England," he says, "where one is so perfectly at liberty and so free from etiquette, or where one has so amiable a *châtelaine*." He was himself an indispensable guest at the Villa, accommodating himself more easily than the Emperor or some of the gentlemen of the Court to the rather tame existence. His talent for the organisation of country-house amusements, charades, etc., was most useful to his hostess, who without him must herself have felt the monotony of a holiday made up chiefly of bathing and walking in the day, conversation and even sewing in the evening, varied by a dance every Sunday night.

In the winter of 1853, as in every subsequent winter, the Emperor and Empress returned to Paris and installed themselves again at the Tuileries in time for the beginning of the

fashionable season in December. Something has already been said in the sixth chapter of the social life in the Palace. Details of the more intimate life in the Imperial departments are to be found chiefly in memoirs of a later period, but, as they serve to give a general idea of how the Empress Eugénie lived from day to day in the Tuileries, they may be glanced at here. The Emperor being much engrossed in work in his own rooms, his wife was rather solitary in the early hours, and reading occupied a good portion of her time. Having a command of three European languages, she had no lack of literature, but it was noted that she devoted most attention to the newspapers, skimming through them all and studying with care the reports of political debates. Until the birth of the Prince Imperial she and the Emperor were alone at *déjeuner* when at the Tuileries. After the meal the Emperor smoked a cigarette in his wife's "workroom" (which with her boudoir, oratory, bed- and dressing-rooms made up her suite of five) and then retired downstairs to his own apartments, which were rather dark and low but were chosen by him as having a private staircase in communication with the Empress's rooms. After he had gone Eugénie sat down every day and wrote a letter to her mother. Then arrived her private secretary Damas-Hinard, a thin smiling old man with scanty white hair,

150 The Last Empress of the French dressed always in black, with a white tie. His voice was unctuous and his respect for his mistress such that he was almost bent double as he approached her. He brought to her, annotated by himself, the innumerable petitions sent to her daily, asking for favours of all kinds. Into these she would insist on going personally, and she was generous in her response to all who seemed deserving. Sometimes in the mornings, very soberly clad, she would drive in an unofficial carriage, kept for the purpose, to the house of a petitioner, and would investigate the merits of the case. Her expenditure on charity was very large, for, apart from what was inspired by the stream of begging letters, she had her regular institutions, hospitals, etc., to which she devoted constant attention. But there was at least one person in the country who spent more in charity than she did, and that was the Emperor himself, whose alms-giving was reckless and was said to amount to the vast figure of 10,000 francs a day. Eugénie, indeed, is said to have reproached her husband for his indiscriminate generosity. In spite of the charges of extravagance made against her, she kept a careful account of all she expended, whether on herself or on others.

Beside Damas-Hinard the Empress had two other curious old people on her literary staff. M. de Saint-Albin, at whom all the

Court laughed as wearing clothes dating from the reign of Louis Philippe, so careless and shabby was he, was her librarian, much valued for his judgment and entrusted with the selection of her books. More extraordinary was her First Reader, who hardly ever read to her and only wrote a few letters with which the private secretary did not deal. The Countess Wagner de Pons was about seventy years of age, and having once been beautiful could not forget it. Her foible was always to be dressed in the latest fashion, and a compliment from her mistress would send her into an ecstasy. Usually she wore a bright brown wig, but one day, charmed at the appearance of Hortense Schneider in "Belle Hélène," she came out in fair hair dressed in the Greek style. This was too much for the Empress's sense of dignity or humour, and a hint was conveyed to Madame Wagner that she was preferred in brown hair. Another delusion of the old lady was that she was of great importance to the Empress, and many a long conversation did she pretend to have with her, relating the details afterwards in confidence to anyone who would listen. In the early Sixties Eugénie appointed a second reader, Mlle. Bouvet, who, under her married name of Madame Carette, has given to the world so many discreet revelations of the domestic life of her mistress. The appointment was made out of kindness

152 The Last Empress of the French entirely, Mlle. Bouvet being left unprovided on her father's death. She was given rooms in the Tuileries, but very seldom had to exercise her duties as reader, unless it was as the Empress prepared for bed.

At two o'clock every day the two ladies-in-waiting whose turn it was arrived at the Tuileries, and one of them accompanied the Empress on her regular drive in the Bois. The drive was so timed that she should show herself to the public there, bowing on every side in answer to salutations, and return in time to dress for dinner. At this meal after Mlle. Bouvet's arrival at the Tuileries the usual number present on ordinary nights was fourteen, including the little Prince Imperial. Even on such informal occasions the rigidity of etiquette which we have already noticed was maintained. The service was so good, however, that, in spite of this and the number of courses, dinner was over in three-quarters of an hour. Of the gatherings in the Salon d'Apollon afterwards we have spoken above. They appear to have continued much the same in Mlle. Bouvet's time as in earlier years. That is to say that it needed all the Empress's energy to prevent a cloud of dulness settling down and enwrapping all present.

If she had not had any special pursuits, the Empress Eugénie must have found tiresome not merely the evenings but the days as well.

Fortunately for her, she took much interest not only in her works of charity, but also in politics, particularly as time went on, in water-colour painting, and (it cannot be denied) in dress. Her attention to the political part of the newspapers has been mentioned. She also was an eager reader of the correspondence coming to the Emperor and was allowed access to his papers. She called herself "the mouse gathering up the Emperor's crumbs" and was said to preserve many a letter which he had thrown away as being unimportant. In the early days she possessed only to a small extent the Emperor's confidence. For instance, she was certainly not asked to share his dreams concerning Italian independence. But after her first regency she took an ever-increasing place in his councils. This was with his consent, for he looked to the possibility of his death while the Prince Imperial was still a boy; but his Ministers bitterly resented the interference, as they considered it, of the Empress.

The subject of the Empress Eugénie's dress has been made a battle-ground for violent controversy. Her enemies have represented her as setting a pernicious example of luxury and foolish changes of fashion which all France followed, as buying dresses at 1000 or 2000 francs each, and as devoting the energies which should have been given to better things to

154 The Last Empress of the French  
mere sartorial frivolity. On the other hand, her defenders say that she was as a rule very simple in her attire and that, if in honour of State occasions she was wont to dazzle the world of fashion, it was only her duty as Empress in a land which prides itself on its taste in millinery. Naturally neither of these views is quite true. An impartial study of the memoirs of ladies of Eugénie's Court leaves the impression that there was very considerable extravagance throughout the Court in the matter of dress, and that the Empress was the great leader of fashion for all, at least up to the Sixties, when the Princess Metternich shared her place. We may accept the Empress's statements, to Dr Evans at Farnborough, that she had never spent more than 1500 francs on any dress; and, in a letter to an American friend in 1906, that only three times in her life did she wear a dress that cost her as much as forty guineas, one being her wedding dress and another her costume at the baptism of the Prince Imperial.<sup>1</sup> But, on the testimony of Madame Carette, she "reformed" the greater part of her wardrobe twice a year, giving the clothes to her women, who sold them at good prices in America. So, although she objected strongly to waste of money,

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *Memoirs* i. 106. Letter quoted in *Daily Chronicle*, June 1906. It may be noted that the collection of furs abandoned at the Tuileries was said to be worth 600,000 francs.



kept her own costume-designer at the Palace, and in person checked her dressmakers' bills as carefully as the rest of her household accounts, she nevertheless spent on dress a large total sum. It was the number of dresses, rather than the individual expensiveness, which made that total large, and it was the imitation of this constant change which infected Society with extravagance. It has very reasonably been urged in excuse for the young Empress that her husband insisted, from the first, on an elaborate wardrobe as on an elaborate ceremonial. He even objected to the simplicity of morning attire which she preferred in the Tuileries—a loose red flannel Garibaldi blouse over a black silk skirt. As she was provided with an ample income to spend on dress and expected to spend it in that way, she would have been in a difficult position, had she objected. But she needed no prompting. She was credited with consummate taste, which we might accept readily if we could forgive the crinoline, and undoubtedly devoted considerable ingenuity to the invention of fashions. It is not correct, of course, to say that she “invented” the crinoline; but she re-introduced the hoop for the same reason for which it was said to have been first worn, to conceal the figure before the birth of her child, and then continued its use. Besides making popular this monstrosity, in which only those

## 156 The Last Empress of the French

looked well who would have looked better without, the Empress gave to the world of fashion Garibaldi blouses, coloured underskirts, and hair-nets. Even milliners, therefore, have to admit that she did not live in vain. Possibly also she was the inventor of the dressing-lift which aroused the curiosity of the Republican invaders of the Tuileries in 1870. This was a lift communicating with the Empress's dressing-room on one floor of the Tuileries and with rooms containing her wardrobes on the floor above. It was customary for her waiting women to dress in the costume proposed for the Empress one of four *mannequins* modelled on her figure and to send it down in the lift. Eugénie could thus see herself before as others would see her later and transfer the clothes from the model to her own person. Needless to say, this dressing-room mystery, when revealed to the eyes of ex-Imperial Paris, provoked derision and abuse.

THE EMPRESS AND  
QUEEN VICTORIA







The Empress Eugénie.  
From Painting by Winterhalter.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE EMPRESS AND QUEEN VICTORIA

THE Crimean War, which was preparing throughout the first year of their married life and broke out in the second, had a very important bearing upon the position in Europe of the Emperor Napoleon and his wife. There have been those who held, or affected to hold, the fantastic opinion that a determining motive of Napoleon in his conduct toward Great Britain was to provide his wife with a sponsor in the courts of Europe. To maintain this is indeed to reduce to low terms the Emperor's diplomacy. No doubt the incidental consequences to his family prestige from Anglo-French friendship delighted him; but a good understanding with England was the central idea of his foreign policy long before his marriage with Eugénie de Montijo. In the disagreements of the Western Powers with Russia he saw his chance of making his policy practical, and in Palmerston he found a statesman with whom he could work satisfactorily.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Avec Palmerston, he once said, on peut faire de grandes choses.*

## 160 The Last Empress of the French

The position of the Empress with regard to a struggle which writers who profess to see traces of her influence in almost every event during the Second Empire represent to have been undertaken to gain for her the countenance of Queen Victoria, was in reality quite simple. The French championship of the Roman Catholic claims over the "Holy Places," which was the starting-point of the French quarrel with Russia, protector of the Orthodox Church, was naturally welcome to her as a continuation of the policy which escorted Pius IX. back to Rome in 1850 with a French Army. Otherwise, she certainly displayed no more enthusiasm for the war than did the mass of French women. The secondary results of the Anglo-French alliance were important to her as leading to Windsor; but she can hardly be accused of foreseeing them or of desiring the war with Russia for their sake.

War was declared at the end of March 1854, Napoleon hesitating at the last owing to the manifest reluctance of the French nation—a great contrast to the eagerness displayed on the other side of the Channel—and the financial depression then weighing the country down. The social aspect of the alliance soon became visible. In the summer of 1854 Napoleon accompanied his wife to Biarritz, where she was to take sea-baths by the doctor's advice, and from Biarritz he sent a letter to Prince Albert, invit-



ing him to meet him at Boulogne in order to see the military camp formed there in connection with the Russian war "which we have begun together," as he wrote. Prince Albert replied, addressing the Emperor as "*Sire et mon Frère*," and accepting the invitation. Napoleon reached Boulogne on the last day of August, leaving the Empress at Biarritz. Prince Albert did not arrive until the 4th September. All Boulogne on that day was decorated with flags and the cliffs were lined with troops, while a heavy artillery salute greeted the entry of the British Royal yacht into the harbour. Napoleon met the Prince with tears in his eyes—were they tears of pleasure at the promise of success?—and did his best to create a good impression on his visitor. The Prince, who wrote home full descriptions of what occurred, found him "not so old nor so pale as his portraits make him, and gayer than he is usually represented." The military character of the entertainment was strictly preserved. Napoleon had with him only his own household ("not distinguished by birth, manners, or education," remarks the Prince, "their tone being rather that of a garrison, with a good deal of smoking"), with the addition of Eugénie's brother-in-law, the Duke of Alba, and Drouyn de Lhuys, then Foreign Minister. He felt it necessary to apologise for being unable to receive the

## 162 The Last Empress of the French

Prince as he could have wished, being only at a hotel, and expressed the hope that Queen Victoria would before long visit Paris with her husband, where he could give them a worthier reception. Prince Albert, in the course of a speech at the banquet before his departure, replied with an informal invitation of the Emperor and Empress to Windsor.

If Prince Albert returned to England "well satisfied with his visit," as Lord Clarendon told the diarist Greville was the case, Napoleon must have been still more satisfied when he left Boulogne for Bordeaux to meet the Empress returning to Paris. On the 20th September, the day of the Alma, they re-entered the Tuileries. They had two victories to rejoice over; and the greater undoubtedly, because the more difficult, was that gained in the struggle for recognition inside that "pale of the ancient monarchies" of which Napoleon had spoken in his famous *parvenu* speech in January of the previous year. At Windsor he and Eugénie would indeed be within the pale, and such rebuffs as the insistence of the Tsar on addressing him as "*Mon Ami*," instead of as "*Mon Frère*," would hardly be repeated. The official confirmation of the invitation to England followed in the spring. It had, it was true, a diplomatic as well as a social significance, but that, of course, did not minimise its importance. The

## The Empress and Queen Victoria 163

slow progress of operations in the Crimea, the death of Saint-Arnaud, and above all the ravages among the allied troops of what the Tsar Nicholas, speaking not long before his own death, called his two Generals January and February, had disgusted France more than ever with the war. The Emperor determined that he would go out to the Crimea himself. He not only believed in the moral effect of his presence but also had a firm belief in his military capacity. His Ministers, however, could not view with equanimity the effects of his departure from France, and all strongly opposed the idea. The British Government was even more in dread of the complications which might arise in the Crimea itself if the Emperor of the French appeared there. Both Governments, therefore, looked with great satisfaction on the idea that Napoleon should go to Windsor to discuss the question.

The invitation was for April. At the end of March Drouyn de Lhuys was sent to London in advance to discuss the question of peace terms, the new Tsar Alexander showing himself more amenable than Nicholas had been; but partly also, it was believed, to arrange some details of etiquette for the coming visit. On the 16th April, in the midst of a Channel fog, the French Imperial yacht arrived off Dover. Prince Albert was already there and stood on the landing-stage

## 164 The Last Empress of the French

to hand the Empress off the boat. The scene is one of the oftenest described in her history, how in view of the curious crowd the Empress Eugénie stepped on shore, in her straw bonnet and her tartan dress under a grey cloak, her hand resting on Prince Albert's, while Napoleon followed, in the general's uniform which he always wore on such occasions. Only a sufficient stay was made at Dover for a luncheon and the presentation of the Corporation's address, and then the train conveyed the party to London. Here what used to be called "Queen's weather" awaited them, and in brilliant sunshine a crowd estimated at fully a million was out in the streets, very loud in its shouts of welcome but behaving excellently. Greville remarks that it was a fine sight for the visitors to see "such vast multitudes, so orderly and so prosperous, and without a single soldier except their own escort." Between Charing Cross and Paddington the streets were all profusely decorated, and in the Emperor's honour bands played "Partant pour la Syrie," his mother's composition. Queen Victoria awaited her guests at Windsor, at the entrance to the Castle. Napoleon hastened forward to kiss her hand, whereon she embraced him twice and then the Empress, as Napoleon introduced her; after which the royal children were presented, Napoleon embracing the thirteen-year-old Prince of Wales. The cordiality of the

## The Empress and Queen Victoria 165

greeting gave the note of the visit. None of the usual forms practised between sovereigns were omitted, writes Greville. He says also :

“None of the sovereigns who have been here before have ever been received with such magnificence by the Court or with such curiosity and delight by the people. Wherever and whenever they have appeared, they have been greeted by enormous multitudes and prodigious acclamations. The Queen is exceedingly pleased with both of them; she thinks the Empress very natural, graceful, and attractive, and the Emperor frank, cordial, and true.”

Queen Victoria's diary fully bears out this statement as to her opinion of the Empress Eugénie. “She is full of courage and spirits,” she wrote, “and yet so gentle, with such innocence and *enjouement*, that the *ensemble* is most charming. With all her great liveliness she has the prettiest and most modest manner.” This tribute to the Empress is well known, for it has been quoted very often. It deserves record again, however, in any history of the Empress Eugénie. Of this conquest which she made, at first sight, of the Queen of the reputedly most exclusive Court in Europe the Empress was very naturally proud. She had through the attitude of other Courts been set in an equivocal position, but now no one could sneer. Her triumph was complete and final, and for her the principal

## 166 The Last Empress of the French

object of the visit was attained almost at the outset. In her turn, Eugénie was said to be immensely impressed by the ceremonial at the British Court and from this time onward to have proved a far more willing listener to her husband's views on etiquette than he had found her before.

With regard to the proposed Crimean journey, Napoleon was talked out of his intention in the course of a long Council at Windsor on the second morning of his arrival, neither Queen nor Empress being present during the consultation. According to Queen Victoria's testimony the Empress Eugénie had at first been as eager as Napoleon himself that he should go to the East, where she saw no greater danger for him than in Paris. She probably thought with him that a little military glory would add to his prestige in France. Nevertheless, he now agreed to abandon his idea.

The programme of entertainment for the Imperial guests began with a military review at Windsor on the second day, and continued on the 18th with the investiture of the Emperor with the Garter and a State Ball. Concerning the ceremony of investiture Greville remarks that Napoleon "took all sorts of old feudal oaths of fidelity and knightly service to the Queen, and he then made her a short speech to the following effect: 'I have sworn to be faithful to Your Majesty and to serve you to the best of

## The Empress and Queen Victoria 167

my ability, and my whole future life shall be spent in proving the sincerity with which I have thus sworn and my resolution to devote myself to your service.'” The following day was spent in London, the Lord Mayor giving a luncheon at the Guildhall, while in the evening a visit was paid to Covent Garden to hear “Fidelio.” The crowd was as enthusiastic in the streets as on the day of the arrival. Napoleon, who knew something of the London mob as well as of that of Paris, made a point of showing himself in public as much as possible. Walewski had expressed great anxiety about his master’s safety as he left France, but the Emperor was determined to prove that he knew England better. His conduct went straight to the heart of the crowd as he drove through the streets. Passing up St James’s, it was amid sympathetic cheers that he was observed to point out to the Empress the house where he had once lived in King Street; and the applause was warmer still as, riding past the Horse Guards, he stood up in the carriage and saluted the colours. He certainly needed no instruction from his Ministers how to comport himself in England.

Part of the next day, the Emperor’s forty-seventh birthday, was spent at the Crystal Palace, not long opened; and on the 21st April the visit came to an end. According to the Malmesbury memoirs, the leave-taking was most touching.

## 168 The Last Empress of the French

“Everybody cried, even the suite. The Queen’s children began, as the Empress had been very kind to them and they were sorry to lose her, and this set off the Empress and maids-of-honour.” Before he left, Napoleon obtained a promise of the visit to Paris for which he had worked at Boulogne; and so, with great hopes fulfilled, he and the Empress returned to their capital to prepare a reception for their coming guests.

The British visit, however, was all but made impossible by an occurrence which might have removed the intended host and left the hostess a widow. On the 28th April the first serious attempt was made to assassinate the Emperor. Plots against him were not new, no less than three having been discovered in 1853. To such the Empress Eugénie had referred at Windsor, when she spoke of there being no greater danger to her husband in the Crimea than in Paris. But the attack of Pianori was nearly successful from the apparent absence of an organised plot beforehand, and only the presence of mind of his companion Edgard Ney, the fourth son of the famous Marshal of the First Napoleon, saved the Emperor’s life.

A week after his return from Windsor, and about five o’clock on a Saturday afternoon, the Emperor left the Tuileries on horseback, with him being Ney and his chief equerry. He intended to meet the Empress, who was driving



## The Empress and Queen Victoria 169

in the Bois de Boulogne. In the Champs Elysées a man suddenly ran forward from the pavement and fired a shot. Ney rode down upon him, but he was able to take a second aim at the Emperor. This proved as ineffective as the first. The police immediately arrested the criminal, an Italian of twenty-eight named Pianori, and Napoleon rode on calmly to the Bois to meet the Empress. As soon as he had communicated the news to her, they turned back to the Tuileries, escorted by a band of the riders in the Bois, Napoleon still on horseback, Eugénie in her carriage, with her handkerchief often to her eyes. The news had preceded them. In the Palace they found waiting for them a crowd composed of the Imperial family, the leading officers of State, and their own households, all eager to congratulate the Emperor on his escape and to express their sympathy with the Empress. To reassure the public, the Emperor insisted on going to the Opera the same night, accompanied by the Empress, who is described as "looking pale and pre-occupied in spite of her efforts to appear calm."

The natural effect of this attempted crime was to heighten the popularity of the Emperor, to whom the whole affair was really very advantageous. He appeared distinctly at his best at such a crisis. The visit to the Tuileries of a deputation from the Senate to offer its con-

170 The Last Empress of the French  
gratulations on the day after the attempt gave him the opportunity of making one of his most astonishing and characteristic speeches. "I thank you," he said, "but I do not in the least fear the efforts of assassins. There are some men who are the instruments of Providence's decrees. As long as I have not accomplished my mission, I run no danger." No better example was ever furnished of the so-called fatalism of Napoleon III.

Pianori's attempt thus turned out ill for none but the author, who was executed after offering as his only defence that "Napoleon had made the Roman campaign [of 1850] and had ruined Italy." The Emperor continued his preparations for returning the hospitality of Windsor. Among the sights of Paris which he had mentioned that he wished to show his visitors was the Exposition Industrielle. This Exhibition was intended to help to revive the languishing trade and industries of France. Although rather inappropriately held in time of foreign war, it was to be illustrative of the arts of peace. Queen Victoria's presence, the first visit of an English sovereign to Paris since the time of James II., was a fortunate addition to the attractions of the Exhibition, about whose success Napoleon was supremely anxious, as well as a personal triumph for himself and the Empress Eugénie.

## The Empress and Queen Victoria 171

The Exposition Industrielle opened on the 15th May. The presidency of the Committee of Management had been given to Prince Napoleon, who had returned from the Crimea to take it up, thereby committing a very foolish act as far as his reputation in France was concerned. The Prince had been a general of division in the Crimea, but found the need of subordination and obedience as galling as his father Jerome had found it in 1812. Moreover he had opposed a war with Russia from the commencement. He welcomed the opportunity offered him to come home, but the immediate result was that not merely his personal enemies but the public generally charged him with cowardice.<sup>1</sup> A derisive nickname of "Plon-plon" given to him now clung to him ever afterwards. His contempt for public opinion enabled him to bear the insult without betraying annoyance. But it was not gratifying to the Emperor to notice how cold was the reception accorded to his cousin as on the opening day of the Exhibition the Prince led him and the Empress to the throne prepared for them and delivered an excellent speech of welcome.

The promised visit of Queen Victoria and

<sup>1</sup> Marshal Canrobert in conversation with Prince Chlodwig von Hohenlohe in 1879 denounced the imputation of cowardice against Prince Napoleon as a slander, but added that "he was a sybarite and camp-life did not suit him" (Hohenlohe Memoirs, II. 244. Eng. Edition).

## 172 The Last Empress of the French

Prince Albert was paid in August, on the day after the French victory on the Tchernaya. The Queen and her consort brought with them the Princess Victoria and the Prince of Wales. Napoleon came to Boulogne to meet them and at two o'clock on the 17th August crossed over a velvet-draped gangway to the Royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* to lead the Queen on shore amid a round of artillery salutes. It was seven o'clock when they reached Paris and was growing dark, to the disappointment of the crowd. As the Queen stepped from the train, while the band played "God save the Queen!" the commandant of the National Guard stepped forward to present a bouquet. Napoleon then drove his guests across Paris through his newly built Boulevard de Strasbourg, under the Arc de Triomphe, through the Bois, and to Saint-Cloud, where they found waiting for them the Empress Eugénie, attended by the Princess Mathilde and her ladies of the Court. The Empress, being at this time *enceinte* (though this fact was not publicly announced until three months later), could take little part in the entertainment of the visitors, which therefore devolved principally on the Emperor himself. He fulfilled his task well, conducting them all to the Exhibition and other points of attraction, and showing special kindness to the young Prince of Wales, to whom now in his fourteenth year

## The Empress and Queen Victoria 173

he gave the first introduction to that Paris for which ever afterwards, both as Prince and as King, he showed so much liking. The visit lasted eight days—"eight happy days," wrote Queen Victoria in a letter after leaving Saint-Cloud—and on the last night there was held the State Ball at Versailles, when the Empress's appearance in white, decorated with diamonds and her Spanish and Portuguese orders, is said to have extorted from her husband the exclamation "*Comme elle est belle!*" There was no doubt of the sincerity of his admiration for his wife.

As had been the case at Windsor, the parting scenes showed that the visit had not been merely one of courtesy. Greville gives a quaint detail in connection with the Prince of Wales. Near the end, he expressed to the Empress Eugénie how reluctant he and his sister Victoria were to leave Paris and asked if she could not get permission from their parents for them to stay a little longer. The Empress, amused, said that she was afraid that the Queen and Prince Albert could not do without them. "Not do without us!" exclaimed the future King Edward. "Don't fancy that, for there are six more of us at home, and they don't want us." Both children had been delighted with their visit and had won high praise for their deportment. "You will be pleased to hear," wrote Prince Albert to

174 The Last Empress of the French  
Stockmar, "how well both the children behaved. They have made themselves general favourites, especially the Prince of Wales, *qui est si gentil*." To their grandmother, the Duchess of Kent, too, he wrote "I am bound to praise the children greatly. They behaved extremely well, and pleased everybody. The task was no easy one for them, but they discharged it without embarrassment, and with natural simplicity."

Queen Victoria appears to have been no less charmed than her children, for according to Lord Clarendon, who accompanied the party, in special charge of the Prince of Wales, she was "delighted with everything and especially with the Emperor himself, who, with perfect knowledge of women, had taken the surest way to ingratiate himself with her. This, it seems, he began when he was in England and followed it up at Paris. After his visit [to Windsor] the Queen talked it over with Lord Clarendon and said: 'It is very odd; but the Emperor knows everything I have done and where I have been ever since I was twelve years old; he even recollects how I was dressed, and a thousand little details it is extraordinary he should be acquainted with.' She has never before been on such a social footing with anybody, and he has approached her with the familiarity of their equal positions, and with all the experience and knowledge of womankind he has acquired during his

## The Empress and Queen Victoria 175

long life, passed in the world and mixing in every sort of society.”<sup>1</sup>

The Prince was less impressed than his wife with the Emperor Napoleon—he had unconquerable suspicions about his political aims; but about the Empress he was even more enthusiastic than Queen Victoria. As the Queen wrote to King Leopold in 1857, “Albert, who is seldom much pleased with ladies or princesses, is very fond of her, and her great ally.”

Another Royal visit to Paris followed that of Queen Victoria, for in November the King of Sardinia arrived, accompanied by Cavour, Nigra, and d’Azeglio. The combination of these great champions of Italian unity points to the King’s journey being of political importance; but no one in France at the time, except the Emperor himself, knew this. Outwardly all that was to be seen was a display of royal affection. Victor Emmanuel provoked the amusement rather than the admiration of the French capital. Extraordinary in looks, morals, and manners,<sup>2</sup> he furnished Parisians with many stories. It was certainly with a strange idea of tact that he talked to the Empress Eugénie about the

<sup>1</sup> Greville Memoirs, 5th September 1855.

<sup>2</sup> “Frightful in person, but a great strong burly athletic man, brusque in his manners, unrefined in his conversation, very loose in his conduct, and very eccentric in his habits” —such is Greville’s description.

176 The Last Empress of the French underclothing of French dancers.<sup>1</sup> But Victor Emmanuel was one whose character compelled that all his vices should be known before his virtues became revealed.

The reception of the King of Italy occasioned the last appearance in public of the Empress before the birth of her son. While the talk of peace, which France so anxiously desired, was growing definite, she was awaiting motherhood. When the Congress of Paris at last met, under the presidency of Count Walewski, now Foreign Minister, she was unable to take any part in social entertainments. The Congress came to an end on the 30th March, after an interruption of four days when the Prince Imperial was born, and its successful issue was celebrated by banquets at the Foreign Office and the Tuileries. Had Eugénie been able to be present, she would have played a prominent part in festivities of the time. The cause of her absence now, however, brought full recompense in the succeeding years of the Imperial mother.

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, 29th November 1855. *On me dit, he said, que les danseuses françaises ne portent pas des caleçons. Si c'est comme cela, ce sera pour moi le paradis terrestre.*



# THE PRINCE IMPERIAL







The Prince Imperial.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PRINCE IMPERIAL

ALTHOUGH it was unofficially known in the summer of 1855 that the Empress Eugénie was expecting the birth of a child, it was not until the late autumn that official sanction was given to the reports. The Countess of Montijo arrived from Spain to be with her daughter at the critical time, and when the Congress of Paris began to sit at the end of February 1856, the birth was expected almost at once. On the 14th March, the Friday before Palm Sunday, the sessions of the Congress were suspended, Napoleon being thrown into a state of great anxiety by the doctors' announcement that the event might now take place at any moment. The diarist Greville was in Paris on the eve of the birth. He writes: "We passed the day [the 15th] in momentary expectation of hearing of the Empress's confinement. No news arrived, but at six in the morning we were wakened from our beds by the sound of the cannon of the Invalides." It had been arranged that one hundred and one guns should be fired if the child was a boy, the signal being given by lights at the Tuileries. Greville continues: "It

## 180 The Last Empress of the French

is a remarkable coincidence that the confinement was as difficult and dangerous as that of Marie Louise, with the same symptoms and circumstances, and that the doctor *accoucheur* in this instance was the son of the Dubois who attended the other Empress.”

Napoleon was reduced to an extraordinary state of nervousness. When told by the doctors that an operation would be necessary he besought them to think only of the Empress. He refused to leave the room, although, as he was reported to have wept for fifteen hours, his must have been rather a disturbing presence. When at length all was over he rushed into the adjoining room, which was full of people, and began embracing everyone in turn. Suddenly he recollected himself and, with the words “I cannot embrace you all,” he ceased. This is the only occasion on which we have a glimpse of Napoleon III. with his calm thrown aside and his “mask” off, and from the fact we may gather some idea of the intensity of his delight at the arrival of an heir. He was himself nearly forty-eight years of age, his health had already given signs of decline, and his throne would be an insecure legacy to an infant. Three years earlier he had remarked to his guest Lord Malmesbury that he had “no time to lose if he was to leave a grown-up heir.”<sup>1</sup> Now at least there was a

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, Memoirs, 20th March 1853.

boy whom he might hope to see grow up under his care to bear the title of Napoleon IV. There was little reason in 1856 to anticipate a melancholy end for the young prince just born.

In his pleasure Napoleon ordered the distribution of 1,000,000 francs in charity and promised that he would be godfather and the Empress godmother of all legitimate children born in France on the same day as the Prince Imperial; the boys were to be called Louis Eugène and the girls Eugénie Louise, and each would receive a present of 3000 francs. He further announced an amnesty for all political proscripents loyally submitting themselves to his Government. The news was very well received in France. The humorists, it is true, seized the opportunity of inventing the riddle "Why is the Emperor changed for the better by his son's birth? *Parce qu'il a un nouveau nez.*" But the people in general were not slow to express good will. Paris illuminated on the Sunday evening to celebrate the birthday. The municipality hastened to vote 200,000 francs for a dinner to the poor of the city. A collection for a present to the child, though limited to subscriptions not exceeding five cents, reached about 100,000 francs. In response to the Empress's wish, the sum was devoted to the foundation of a "Prince Imperial's Orphanage"—an echo of her tactful

182 The Last Empress of the French  
and benevolent action with regard to her wedding present from Paris.

Not only France but the rest of Europe, too, joined in the celebrations of the event of Palm Sunday. At Rome, where the pilgrims were gathered in preparation for Holy Week, the Pope ordered a salute of a hundred and one guns to be fired from the Castle of San Angelo to proclaim the news. In the Crimea, where pending the conclusion of the treaty a state of war still existed, not only did the Allies fire a similar salute in conquered Sebastopol and its harbour and illuminate their lines by night when Marshal Pelissier received the telegram from his master, but the Russians also did the same, a courtesy which pleased Napoleon immensely. The various courts of Europe despatched no less than twenty-eight Orders to the infant, to whom his father had already given the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour to wear in his cradle. This cradle, which was afterwards presented by the Empress to the City of Paris and finally came into her possession again in exile, to be placed by her in the room at Farnborough devoted to memorials of the Prince, was a very elaborate construction in the shape of a boat of rose-wood, with decorations of silver, bronze, and enamel plaques. At the foot stood an Imperial eagle, and at the head a silver statuette, representing Paris, held a gilt-bronze crown



over the pillow. Lying in such a bed, with the scarlet of the Legion of Honour about him, the baby is described by Fleury, with vivid imagination, as "seeming to understand, without surprise, the honours paid to him!"

A private baptism was celebrated in the Tuileries on the day of the birth, in the presence of the Emperor, the leading members of his Court and Government, and the Duke of Alba, who soon returned to Madrid to fetch Queen Isabella's gift of the Golden Fleece to his nephew. The public baptism did not take place until three months later, owing to the illness of the Empress, who recovered slowly from her severe shock. In the middle of May she was well enough to move to Saint-Cloud, and a month later she returned with the Emperor and their child to the Tuileries.

Notre Dame was once more gorgeously decorated within as in January 1853; with the addition of a throne for the Cardinal Legate Patrizzi, who came to represent the Pope, godfather of the Prince. At five o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday, the 14th June, an eight-horse carriage containing the Emperor, Empress, and Prince Imperial left the Tuileries and drove through lines of troops, and behind them the populace of Paris, to the Cathedral. At the door they were met by the Archbishop of Paris with Holy Water, and then the ceremony took place

184 The Last Empress of the French  
in the transept, where had been erected a temporary altar, the velvet-canopied thrones, and between them the baptismal font, a vase of damascened copper reputed to have been brought back by Louis VII. from the Crusades. The Prince, in an ermine-lined robe of crimson velvet, was carried to the font in the arms of Madame Bruat, official Governess of the Children of France, and was christened with the names Napoléon-Eugène-Louis-Jean-Joseph, his godparents being Pope Pius IX., represented by Cardinal Patrizzi, and Queen Josephine of Sweden and Norway, represented by the Grand Duchess Stéphanie of Baden. The baptism completed, Madame Bruat handed the Prince to his father, who held him up in his arms to all in the church to see "with a gesture very expressive of joy and tenderness," writes Baron Imbert de Saint-Amand, who was one of those present; while the *Vivat* composed by Lesueur for the heir of Napoleon I. was played by the orchestra.

The child was immediately driven back to the Tuileries; the father and mother awaited the *Te Deum* and benediction from the Papal Legate, after which they drove to the Hôtel de Ville to be present at the banquet to four hundred guests, given by the City of Paris. The elaborate scale of this banquet may be imagined from the records that the service used cost 250,000 francs,

the flowers 50,000 francs, and that 18,000 candles were consumed in lighting the tables. Fleury in his memoirs describes the Imperial family driving home, when all was over, in six-horse green and gold berlins with plate-glass windows, lighted from within, displaying the Empress and princesses, resplendent with diamonds, to the admiration of the crowd which was still about in the streets.

Great as was the triumph of the Empress-mother on the 14th June, an even greater cause for pride awaited Eugénie, devout daughter of the Church, when five days later at Saint-Cloud Cardinal Patrizzi presented to her the Golden Rose, the highest religious honour for women, which Pius IX. bestowed on her through his legate to the Imperial baptism. The last bestowal of the Rose had been in 1850, when Pius sent it to the Queen of Naples in memory of the shelter given to him, an exile from his own dominions, at Gaeta. Now the Rose, "signifying," in the words of the Cardinal, "the gladness of the two Jerusalems, the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant, and representing in the eyes of the faithful that most magnificent flower, the joy of the saints," was bestowed on her who had given a godson to the Holy Father and an heir to the Eldest Son of the Church. In three years' time how different were the relations of Rome and France to be! But at

## 186 The Last Empress of the French

least the Empress Eugénie was not to forfeit the regard of her Church. Her Golden Rose—which was in reality a rose-bush of gold growing from a vase of the same metal, on a base of lapis lazuli, adorned with two bas-reliefs representing the birth and presentation of the Virgin Mary and with the Papal and Napoleonic arms—she kept in her bedroom in the Tuileries, together with a palm blessed and sent to her by the Pope on every anniversary.

The birth of the Prince Imperial made a great difference to his mother's position. If in the months preceding it she had been compelled to absent herself almost entirely from public life, she became a much more prominent personage in the State since she had performed the duty expected of her in giving to the Emperor an heir. She is said before that event to have been haunted by a dread of the fate of the Empress Josephine. Now at least all such fear was past, and in less than two years' time a striking proof of her altered status was given. It cannot be supposed that, had she remained childless, the provisions for her regency would have been made which actually followed the Orsini attempt. When Napoleon's wish of going to the Crimea had seemed impossible to thwart, it was a regency of ex-King Jerome, not of the Empress Eugénie, which had been discussed. After the Prince Imperial was born, the claims of Jerome

and his son were immeasurably diminished. One result of this was that Prince Napoleon was driven into more uncompromising opposition. The Prince had perhaps been only human in his satisfaction at the barren union of the Emperor; but he was credited with a sneering suggestion that nothing else could be expected of his cousin. Whoever was its originator, both Emperor and Empress rejoiced at the refuting of this malicious falsehood.

One of the common accusations brought against the Empress Eugénie, during the long period in which so much industry was devoted to the blackening of her character, was that she was a harsh mother to her child. The charge was supported by a carefully pointed contrast between her attitude and her husband's, and by references to a partiality shown by the boy for his father's society. The basis of the accusation in reality seems to amount to this. Napoleon certainly idolised his son and was willing to indulge him in every respect. His tenderness of heart, however, did not make him a very wise guide in bringing up a child. We may remember Mérimée's story of the children's party at Biarritz in 1861, when the Prince was not much more than five. Napoleon insisted on mixing with his own hands some champagne and soda-water for the small guests to drink, the consequence of which was that for a quarter of an

188 The Last Empress of the French  
hour they were all tipsy and made such a noise that Mérimée, who was in the room with them, got a headache. Not only was Napoleon undiscriminating in his kindness, but his son possessed a will. The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher describes him as a very determined and independent child, a little fractious, and not easy to manage. To win a smile from him the Emperor would drop all his usual gravity. The Empress Eugénie had not her husband's talent for amusing a child; but, adds the Countess Stéphanie while admitting this, *je la trouve délicieuse avec son enfant.*

Eugénie, in fact, had the difficult and ungrateful task of correcting the errors in the Emperor's treatment of their child. The normal positions were reversed. If Napoleon's love for his son was, as many have written, that of a mother rather than a father, Eugénie felt that she must play the part which is traditionally fatherly. The natural result was that outsiders were led to consider her stern to Prince Louis and that he himself was attracted rather to the more indulgent of his two parents. As time passed and differences, more political than domestic, and mainly concerning the attitude of France toward Rome, arose between father and mother, there undoubtedly began to be a certain struggle for the control of the boy. Eugénie was then taxed by observers friendly to Napoleon

with attempting to keep the Prince Imperial completely under her own domination and to separate him from the Emperor, who in any case, being so busy a man, saw comparatively little of the Prince. At the same time they joined the anti-Imperialists in representing Eugénie as a very Spartan mother, so that she had to suffer from the imputations of the Emperor's friends and enemies alike. But at least no one made out that she did not care for her son, however her methods were criticised. For his first eight years she entirely ruled his manner of life for him, arranging his hours for work, play, walks, and rides, his clothes, and his conduct generally. His system of education she drew up in consultation with Miss Shaw (Miss Schow she quaintly appears in some of the memoirs), a large and very dignified, yet smiling-faced, English lady, who is described as having partly forgotten her native language and never having properly acquired French, but speaking a curious mixture of the two. She was, however, entirely devoted to "My Baby" or "My Prince," as she called him. She was engaged in England immediately after his birth and remained with him all through his childhood. She hurried to Hastings when she heard of his flight from France in September 1871, and was among the first to greet him and the Empress there. It may be noted that Miss Shaw did not long sur-

190 The Last Empress of the French  
vive the death of him whom she declared "too good for this world."

In addition to Miss Shaw there was the official governess, Madame Bruat. At eight years of age — when Mlle. Bouvet describes Prince Louis as a beautiful child, with an open countenance, a white skin, his mother's blue eyes, and curling brown hair—the feminine control was a little modified, and he had assigned to him a tutor and an equerry. The first tutor was a M. Monier, who was succeeded by M. Filon, afterwards the biographer of Prosper Mérimée. From his eighth birthday, too, he was permitted to dine with his parents. Up to then his only meal with them was *déjeuner* when they were at the Tuileries. After *déjeuner* he was accustomed to spend some time with his father, ever ready to play with him, in the Empress's "work-room." Then, when the hour arrived for his drive, his mother sent him off, carefully making the sign of the cross on his brow. On the drive he was accompanied by one of his personal attendants and often by the little Louis Conneau, son of the Emperor's faithful doctor, who was his chief playmate.

Stories of the sayings of the Prince Imperial were as common as about most favourite children; and "Loulou" was almost as much adored by the Bonapartist masses as by the Emperor himself. These sayings, if not very



remarkable, seem to show an alert intelligence.<sup>1</sup> Physically the Prince was not a strong child and after an attack of scarlet fever, followed by a relapse, his chances of life were not considered very hopeful. The concern shown for him by King William of Prussia in 1867 is said to have touched the Empress's heart. However, with care, his health mended, and at the age of fourteen he was considered robust enough to go to the front in the war against that same King William.

<sup>1</sup> See, *e.g.*, p. 244



1857

N



## CHAPTER XI

1857

THE years immediately following the birth of her son were years of great importance to the Empress Eugénie. Her motherhood had not only strengthened her position in the State, particularly against the pretensions of the next-of-kin, but had given her, too, a guarantee of Napoleon's regard. It may be doubted whether in any event, Napoleon III. could have been induced to follow the cruel policy of his uncle toward Josephine. But there would always have been a lingering insecurity in the status of a childless Empress, which the appearance of the Prince Imperial removed entirely.

Nevertheless, to the very event which promised her security and continued happiness can be traced a cause of sorrow to the Empress. From 1856 onward, according to close observers, there was a less intimate relation between husband and wife. Napoleon could never be considered a faithful husband, and the birth of an heir certainly lessened his sense of duty toward his wife. Common talk of the Court made 1860 the year of domestic crisis. To this allusion will be made

196 The Last Empress of the French later. It is sufficient here to record that there were reasons for complaint on the part of the Empress, and that the theory is not unreasonable which makes the growth of her political tendencies due to this as well as to the anti-Papal direction of her husband's policy about the beginning of 1859.

Before the manifestation of her political development, however, the Empress gave signs of a greater social freedom after she had become a mother. At the height of her beauty, which at this period the rapturous Countess Stéphanie describes as "perfect in its minutest details" and "taking first place everywhere by its brilliancy and distinction," she presided over the movement of her Court towards its highest pitch of magnificence and extravagance in the early Sixties. The winter following the close of the Crimean War, however, was as gay and frivolous as any later seasons. It began with the visit of the Crown Prince of Prussia in December, when, accompanied by a suite which included Von Moltke, he lodged at the Tuileries, which was one day to see him enter in a very different rôle from that of invited guest. The murder on the 3rd January 1857 of Monseigneur Sibour, the Archbishop of Paris who had married Napoleon and Eugénie and had baptised their child, hardly made any break in the festivities. The author of that naïvely eulogistic work "La Cour du

Second Empire" singles out the ball given by Count Walewski at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February as the most notable social event of the season, and as Baron Imbert de Saint-Amand was himself present on the occasion, his description is full and amusing. It was a fancy-dress dance, and the guests as they arrived were received by their host in the costume of a minister of the old régime, black velvet ornamented with jet and a blue ribbon, and by the Countess as Diana, with a tiger-skin and a golden quiver on her shoulders, a diamond crescent in her hair, and a bow in her hand. The rooms glittered with a thousand lights and were filled with such a profusion of flowers that the greenhouses of Paris must have been stripped to decorate them. Within, what remained most vividly in the Baron's memory after forty years—his book was written in 1897—was the number of pretty women. There was the Princess Mathilde, "superb in blue damask"; Princess Joachim Murat, in white damask, with diamonds and roses; Princess Tsartoryska, daughter of Queen Cristina of Spain, as a *citoyenne* of Louis XVI.; Madame Fleury, "a grave and severe beauty," in the costume of Marie Antoinette; the Countess of Brigode as an Indian Amazon, in a red leather bodice, covered with pearls and beads, a flower-embroidered gauze skirt, and on her head a panther's scalp with

## 198 The Last Empress of the French

green glass eyes ; Lady Cowley in Queen Anne dress ; and the other Ambassadors, etc. And, not least of all, there was the Countess Castiglione as "Queen of Hearts," her skirt and corsage laced with chains of hearts and a heart-shaped crown upon her flowing hair. (The gallant writer does not mention a fact supplied by others who have described the scene, that the Countess displayed so much of her beauty as to cause quite a stir, and many guests were standing upon chairs to get a good view of her.) Most of the men were in black coats and knee-breeches, with Venetian mantles, but a few were in dominos. Among the latter was a rag-picker, in white satin spangled with golden suns and hearts, wearing on his head a policeman's cap adorned with diamonds. A gilt wicker basket hung about him, full of gardenias and camellias, which he distributed to the ladies with his left hand, while his right held a lighted lantern on a silver hook. As he drew near to a blue domino, he put out his light, saying "I was looking for a man. I have found him!" The rag-picker was Count Amelot de Chaillou ; the blue domino the Emperor. The Empress in the early part of the evening wore a simple dress and domino, in which she escaped notice. At supper-time she appeared in "a delightful Bohemian costume, and the mask which hid the lower part of her face did not altogether conceal her glowing



beauty. One could not dream of a more graceful carriage, a finer figure, or more sparkling eyes," exclaims the intoxicated Baron.

Other royal visits followed that of the Prussian Crown Prince. The early part of May saw the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia, brother of the Tsar, a guest at Fontainebleau, and the day after he left he was succeeded by King Maximilian II. of Bavaria, who paid the penalty in his mysterious death seven years later for his opposition to Prussia. Maximilian is said to have been declared by the Empress Eugénie the handsomest man she had ever seen.

After their visitors had left, it was the turn of the Emperor and Empress to be received elsewhere. In August they made their second journey together across the Channel. They were preceded by Prince Napoleon, who, after trips to Berlin and Dresden as guest of the Prussian and Saxon Courts, made a tour in England and Ireland in July. He was unofficially accompanied by the notorious Cora Pearl, whose reputation filled Paris and overflowed into Europe; but at least he signalled his return to propriety by a visit to Osborne before he quitted England.

It was on the morning of the 6th August that the Emperor and Empress reached the Isle of Wight, the Prince Consort meeting them by boat, while the Queen awaited them

200 The Last Empress of the French  
on the landing-stage. There was not the social importance attached to this visit which belonged to that of 1855. Napoleon and Eugénie came as old friends, not as acquaintances awaiting possible admittance to intimacy. But there were political ends in view also. Lord Malmesbury wrote in his diary on the 10th August: "The object of this visit is kept very secret, but I have no doubt that it is to discuss the question of the Principalities, upon which the English and French Governments are at variance. . . . The Emperor has long been very much dissatisfied, and I suppose that, finding that Persigny has failed in obtaining any concessions, he has come to try and settle matters himself with the Queen; and certainly his bringing his Foreign Secretary, together with the fact that Lords Palmerston and Clarendon are summoned to meet him, looks very like a conference."

Malmesbury was quite right in his surmise. It was the question of the Danubian Principalities which brought the Emperor of the French to England. Napoleon was, as it were, giving his "principle of nationalities" a trial trip before he raised the Italian Question in practical form. His policy at this time was more consistent than his allies were inclined to suspect. He had begun in the previous year to conciliate Russia, in preparation for a move against Austria, and now he desired to obtain

an European recognition of his favourite theory concerning the rights of peoples. On the 8th August a conference took place at Osborne, Napoleon having with him Walewski and Persigny, then Ambassador in London, while the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were present. When Napoleon and the Empress left on the 10th, he had gained his point and persuaded Britain to agree to his demands from the Porte. Once more he crossed the Channel well pleased with his visit. On her side, Queen Victoria wrote to King Leopold that the visit was "satisfactory and agreeable in every way." "Politically," she added, "it has been a blessing from Heaven, as Lord Clarendon says, for the unfortunate difficulties of the Principalities have been smoothed over and arranged in a satisfactory manner."

As far as the Governments, and still more the ruling families, were concerned, the cordiality of the Anglo-French understanding was unimpaired. Affectionate letters passed between the Tuileries and Osborne immediately after the end of the French visit. A week later Queen Victoria, making an unexpected descent on Cherbourg, was warmly welcomed by the municipality, in absence of the Emperor; and in September the Duke of Cambridge went over to meet Napoleon at the camp of Châlons for a military review. The estrangement over the

## 202 The Last Empress of the French

terms of peace with Russia seemed likely to be forgotten entirely by the beginning of 1858, when a new incident arose to make it really serious. But, in order not to anticipate the order of events, we must return to the summer of 1857.

After a very brief stay in Paris for the opening of the new Louvre buildings, whereby the Louvre and Tuileries were at last united in a connected group, Napoleon, with the Empress Eugénie and the Prince Imperial, departed again on the 17th August for Biarritz. He left the Empress, however, a week later, and before the end of August had reached Châlons, where he was to spend a month in camp. Eugénie meanwhile remained at her favourite Biarritz for her usual holiday by the sea and within easy reach of her native land. On the present occasion there was the additional attraction of the presence of that remarkable person, Home the medium. Of all the actions for which her critics so indiscriminately attacked the Empress, perhaps the only one concerning which the censure did not exceed the merits of the case was her protection of this spiritualist wonder-worker. The complete history of David Dunglas Home perhaps will never be written. There are those now who believe that something lay behind the ordinary tricks of the quack, which were good enough to take in so many who flocked to Home's *séances*.

On the other hand, while his chief enemies in France were persuaded that he was an agent in the pay of the Berlin Government, this charge appears now to have no ground. Of his unworthiness of the patronage of a self-respecting sovereign there can be no doubt, and the favour shown to him, for a brief while by Napoleon, and all through by the Empress, can but diminish our estimate of their mental powers.

Home appeared in Paris in the spring of 1857. Although born in Scotland, he first became known to fame in the United States, whither he was taken as a child of nine. At the age of seventeen or eighteen he began to deal in spirit-messages and when he landed in England in 1855 he had already a reputation. Being received into the Roman Catholic Church in Italy next year, he was understood to have given up his practices ; but in Paris in 1857 an attack of catalepsy, it was said, was followed by a return of his "powers." Soon after this he is found in the house of a Russian lady, living in Paris, who before a ball asked him to give an exhibition. Home complied with the now well-known manifestation of moving pictures on the walls and disturbance of furniture. His hostess then introduced him to her guests, fashionable ladies most eager to get into touch with the occult ; and he secured enough invitations to assure him a brilliant future in

204 The Last Empress of the French  
the French capital.<sup>1</sup> At last stories of his influence over tables and chairs, his production of mysterious music, and his messages from the spirits reached the Empress's ears, and she persuaded a friend to introduce the magician to the Palace. Home consented to give a *séance* in the intimate circle of the Court, and one evening in June a round table was brought into a room where were gathered the Emperor and Empress, King Maximilian of Bavaria, Count Walewski, the Duke of Bassano, and various Court ladies and gentlemen. Over the table was thrown a long cloth, and the company seated themselves round it, while Home directed the lowering of the lights. Rapping commenced without delay, but the spirits' first message was a request that the unbelievers Walewski and Bassano should withdraw. That the two were hostile to his pretensions Home knew already. Their retirement proved satisfactory, for the sounds of an accordion began to be heard in the room. Then one of the ladies, expressing a desire for her dead father's presence, felt a clammy hand on hers. Next Maximilian's shoulder was touched by an unseen hand and a cold breath blew upon

<sup>1</sup> Mr D. S. Margoliouth in his book on "Mohammed" (p. 113) points out an interesting similarity between Home and Mohammed in that both were able to dispense with the appeals for support from their converts which other missionaries made. This ability to do without pay or charity was a most successful card for a medium or a prophet to play.

his face. This kingly evidence was considered very impressive and the patronage of the Tuileries was secured.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing outside the bounds of the modern medium's repertory was shown; but the tricks were more convincing in 1857, for they were fresher. Home's fame received an undesigned advertisement, however, soon after this, which was almost too startling even for him. A young Marquis, who was one of his converts, pressed him to be allowed to see his dead *fiancée*. Yielding to his importunity, Home told him to visit his house one day, and on his arrival took him into a room and left him alone. He returned a little later to find the Marquis dead on the floor, a heart-failure having befallen him.<sup>2</sup> The uproar which followed would have secured Home's banishment now, it was said, but for the Empress's intervention in his favour. In the eyes of her and his admirers, mostly ladies of the Court, he was only more mysteriously attractive than ever.

<sup>1</sup>The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher asserts that on another occasion at the Palace a lady asked to see her dead husband, killed in the Crimea, whereon a heavy chair crossed the room and halted near the table, balancing itself. The dead General had a habit of tilting his chair, and Home now declared he could see him and described his wounds. The widow was much affected.

<sup>2</sup>P. de Lano "Le Secret d'un Empire." He gives the story on the authority of some private notes made by "a statesman of importance."

## 206 The Last Empress of the French

Accordingly he was taken with the Court to Biarritz, in spite of the rapidly growing scandal outside fashionable circles and in the European Press. Here he overstepped the limits of patience of the Emperor, who had already ceased his belief. Controlling the pencil with which the spirits wrote when they did not use the table for rapping, he produced a message signed by "Queen Hortense" and giving the advice that "the Emperor should make war to deliver Italy from the Austrians"—a remark which gave rise to the theory that he was a German agent for provoking France against Austria. Napoleon did not desire the spirits' intervention in his secret designs; and, yielding at last to the long-urged entreaties of Walewski, who not only considered Home a dangerous and discrediting guest at Court and spoke bitterly of the "juggleries of the charlatan," but also was an enemy of Sardinian pretensions against Rome, he disregarded the protests of the Empress and gave Home notice to leave France at once.

So, much to the advantage of Eugénie's reputation, there departed from France one who was certainly the cleverest of his tribe. Apart from his spiritualist accomplishments and his already mentioned independence of pecuniary rewards, Home had no personal advantages to account for his success. He was an ordinary-looking man, tall, slight, with an intelligent



face, keen, but mournful blue eyes, and rather insignificant features. He looked about twenty-one or two in 1857, and was actually only twenty-four. He called himself an American of high Scottish descent. He was in fact a natural son of the tenth Earl of Home. His mental ancestry is less in shadow than his racial, and none of his predecessors in the art of playing upon human credulity could have any reason to be ashamed of a connection with David Douglas Home.

Home seems to have made a brief reappearance at the Tuileries in 1865, after he had visited the principal courts of Europe, giving *séances* at all. No such notoriety, however, attached to his second visit as to that in 1857. Yet a third time he was seen in France in 1870, when he followed the Prussian forces to Versailles. His former Imperial patrons were then far away from the Palace at which they had once received him.

The stay of the Empress Eugénie at Biarritz this year was made memorable for her, apart from the fact that it saw the end of Home's ascendancy, by a visit which she paid to Spain, in company with her sister and three of her ladies, on the 17th September. It was but a brief evening excursion by boat from Biarritz, but the town of San Sebastian illuminated in her honour and received her with a military

208 The Last Empress of the French band. As has been said before, informal trips across the frontier into the land of her birth were a regular part of the Empress's yearly sojourns at Biarritz; but no more elaborate visit than that to San Sebastian was made until six years later.

The holiday by the sea was prolonged in 1857 for the reason that the Emperor was busily engaged elsewhere. After his month at Châlons he went to Germany, with deep political objects in view, making, however, a pretext merely of returning the call which the King of Würtemberg had made on him in Paris the previous year. William of Würtemberg was the brother of Jerome Bonaparte's second wife Catherine, and although he had been a very ungrateful and even cruel brother to the unfortunate Queen of Westphalia,<sup>1</sup> his conduct as uncle to Jerome's and Catherine's children was evidently considered a sufficient atonement for past offences, for the now old King was on excellent terms with the French Imperial family. At Stuttgart, by no undesigned coincidence, Napoleon found that the Tsar Alexander had arrived a day earlier, and on a smaller scale there was reproduced the meeting of another Napoleon and another Tsar Alexander at Erfurt in September 1808. There was not on this occasion the *parterre* of kings of

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's "The Burlesque Napoleon," pp. 274, 336.

which Napoleon I. had boasted, but at least there were the two Emperors, King William of Würtemberg, his wife, and the Queen of Holland, a guest at Stuttgart; and a few days later the Tsarina arrived, bringing with her the Queen of Greece. Politicians might with good reason suspect a plot, for on the day following the thirty-ninth anniversary of the conference of Emperor and Tsar at Erfurt, Emperor and Tsar were in private conversation for an hour in the villa of the Crown Prince at Stuttgart. No one was present at the interview, but the two parted cordially, the Tsar leaving Würtemberg the same day, and Napoleon the next. Each monarch had brought with him to Stuttgart his Foreign Minister, and in the breasts of Walewski and Gortshakoff were locked up for the present whatever they knew of the secrets of their masters.

It was thus after an exceptionally busy and important autumn that Napoleon rejoined his wife. The first step had been secured in the movement which was to convulse Southern Europe less than two years later. The full extent of the Emperor's designs was known to no one. If Walewski was aware of a plot against Austria, he must still have been ignorant of the consequences involved for Rome, since he was strongly pro-Papal. Prince Napoleon alone was likely to be in thorough agreement

210 The Last Empress of the French with his cousin ; but, though a little later he was obviously in the Emperor's full confidence, there is no indication that he was yet allowed to share in the dream of United Italy. Least of any in his circle could the Empress Eugénie be permitted by her husband to suspect designs which threatened the power of the Holy Father.

The usual theory about the cause which decided—it can hardly be said precipitated—Napoleon's intervention in Italy is that he was alarmed by the attempt of Orsini at the beginning of 1858. Amplifications of this theory represent him as the ex-carbonaro of 1831 trembling at the threats of vengeance of the comrades whom he had deserted. It may be remarked that the vengeance was very slow, seeing that twenty-seven years saw the deserter still living. It is true, on the other hand, that the various plots against the Emperor were all Italian. Since the failure of Pianori the Paris police had arrested in 1857 three Italians just arrived from London. They were convicted of the design of murdering the Emperor, one being transported for life, the others imprisoned for ten years each. The attempt of 1858 was a far more serious affair, and, whether or not it had any influence on the Emperor's designs in Italy, it was at least followed directly by an unforeseen effect on the relations of France and Britain.

But for the Emperor's determination (with which his wife most heartily sympathised) to maintain the Anglo-French understanding at all reasonable costs, it would assuredly have shattered that agreement beyond remedy.



# THE ORSINI ATTEMPT





## CHAPTER XII

### THE ORSINI ATTEMPT

THERE was nothing to distinguish the winter of 1857-58 from the usual winter seasons of the Second Empire until the arrival of the 14th January. Emperor, Empress, and Court had returned to Paris after the autumn's end to resume the usual round of gayeties which concealed the course of political events. Eminent foreign visitors were fewer than in many years, the principal guest at the Tuileries being the Duke of Coburg, who was in Paris in time to be all but an eye-witness of the crime which startled the world. The details of the Orsini plot are well known and need only be given briefly here. Felix Orsini had twice been in an Italian prison; the second time at Mantua, whence he soon escaped and fled to England. In the course of a lecturing tour he met another refugee, named Pieri, in Birmingham. Taking to themselves as a third conspirator a Frenchman living in London, Dr Simon Bernard, they organised a plot against the life of Napoleon III. Two minor associates joined them, Rudio, a Venetian of good family, who had

216 The Last Empress of the French got into trouble and was teaching languages at Nottingham ; and Gomez, a Neapolitan, who was Orsini's servant. Orsini left England at the end of November 1857, with a passport bearing the name of Thomas Allsopp, and, passing through Brussels, established himself in rooms in Rue Mont-Thabor in Paris on the 15th December, having in his luggage a number of bombs. Pieri and Gomez joined him on the 8th January and Rudio two days later, Piero and Rudio taking a room at a small hotel in Montmartre. So far, all appeared to have gone excellently for the conspirators ; but, as a matter of fact, something was already known to the police. Pieri had come by way of Brussels with one bomb in his possession. Brussels was the asylum of many French malcontents and exiles, and one of these, a watchmaker, got to know Pieri's secret. Although an Orleanist, the watchmaker did not approve of assassination as a weapon against the Emperor-usurper, and he gave information to the French Legation. A description of Pieri was sent to Paris, where the police immediately began to search for him.

On the night of the 14th January a special performance was taking place at the Opera, a benefit for the retiring baritone Massol, and the presence of Emperor and Empress was promised. It was noted afterwards what a tragic programme had been chosen, including the execution

scene from "Maria Stuarda" and the masquerade from "Gustavus III." The Imperial party was expected to arrive at half-past eight, the Duke of Coburg awaiting them in the vestibule of the Opera House. A crowd was about in the Rue Lepelletier to see them drive up, among whom were the four assassins, Orsini with two bombs and the others with one each. Orsini had taken up his post, when he saw Pieri passing him, accompanied by someone whom he did not know. As he passed he winked at Orsini, who failed to comprehend him. The unknown was a police agent, and Pieri was his captive. As the police, however, were not aware that there were four in the plot, the other three were still safe. Shortly after, two carriages and an escort appeared, coming toward the Opera House. In the first carriage were several officials of the Imperial household, in the second the Emperor and the Empress, with General Roguet, aide-de-camp, sitting opposite them. The second carriage was just drawing up when three explosions in rapid succession were heard, all the lights in front of the Opera were extinguished, and every window near was shivered. Gomez had thrown the first bomb in front of the carriage, Rudio the second to one side of it, and Orsini the third right under it. It was impossible at first to make out what had happened. When lights were procured, it was found that

218 The Last Empress of the French  
Napoleon and Eugénie were safe, the aide-de-camp severely wounded near the ear, the coachman and footmen of the Imperial carriage all badly injured, one horse killed and the other mortally wounded. In the crowd around the entrance twelve were killed and a hundred and fifty-six injured.

The escape of the intended victims was astonishing. Seventy-six fragments of the bombs were afterwards counted embedded in various parts of the coach. The Emperor's hat was pierced and his nose was scratched. Roguet was bleeding so profusely that the Empress's white cashmere gown was much stained. But she personally was untouched and preserved an admirable calm. As people crowded round her and Napoleon, she exclaimed "Don't trouble about us. This is part of our profession. Look after the wounded."<sup>1</sup> In a few minutes she entered the Imperial box with the Emperor. The scene from "Maria Stuarda" had been

<sup>1</sup>"Mérimee et Ses Amis." M. Filon says that the Empress Eugénie's courage made Mérimée complain. When after each plot he urged the necessity of greater precautions she answered: "If we thought about it we should never sleep. It is best not to think of it and to trust in Providence." Persigny testifies in a despatch to Walewski on the 18th January to what an extent the Empress's behaviour inspired approval, for he tells how greatly people (in London) had been struck by the courage and coolness of the Emperor and Empress. "They knew what might be expected from the character of the Emperor; but the Empress appears in an entirely new light and has gained universal admiration."

reached, and the late Adelaide Ristori had just scornfully denounced Elizabeth as "Bastard!" when the explosion was heard. There was no panic, the actress continuing her part, but the news of what had happened spread rapidly over the house. A tremendous demonstration greeted Napoleon and Eugénie as they appeared and they had to bow repeatedly in acknowledgment. At last the Emperor waved his hand encouragingly to Madame Ristori and the performance went on. Napoleon and Eugénie stayed to the end and then drove home through a shouting crowd and illuminated streets to the Tuileries, where the diplomatic body, the high officials of State, and many others were gathered to offer congratulations. A report had spread, and was not entirely dissipated, that they had been killed. The reception accordingly was very warm as they entered the saloon, Napoleon as calm as ever and the Empress smiling on all. It was said, however, that she broke down at last when she reached the Prince Imperial's cradle and was free from the gaze of the curious.

Even more strange, perhaps, than the escape from injury of Emperor and Empress was the fact that all the perpetrators of the crime were arrested the same night. A search through the Rue Lepelletier revealed Gomez in an Italian restaurant, weeping. Questioned by the police, who found a revolver under one of the tables in

the shop, he asserted that he was the English valet of Mr Allsopp, of 10 Rue Mont-Thabor. Thither the police went at once and found Orsini in bed. Being himself wounded by his first bomb, he had been unable to throw the second, and after having his hurt dressed he had gone home. Seeing that Gomez had compromised him, he admitted who he was and was removed to gaol. Nor did Rudio escape, for, Pieri having stated that he lived with another man in the Montmartre hotel, the police went thither and arrested Rudio. The unintentional treachery of two of the plotters thus led to the capture of all—except Bernard, of course, who took no active part in the work and had not left England.

On the following day, to reassure Paris, the Emperor and Empress drove out unescorted along the boulevards and visited the wounded who had been removed to hospital the night before. From every part of France poured in congratulations, and as far as Napoleon was concerned, the abortive attempt on his life was, like that of Pianori, most advantageous as an incentive to demonstrations of popular loyalty. He was able, in the state of public excitement and anger, to take measures of precaution which would have been otherwise impossible. At the opening of the Chambers four days after the outrage he gave warning to all inciters to dis-

turbance and organisers of conspiracies that their time was over, and concluded with the assurance : “Such attempts can shake neither my present security nor my faith in the future. While I live, the Empire lives with me ; and if I fell the Empire would be still more consolidated by my death, for the indignation of the people and the army would be an additional support to my son’s throne.” Following upon this came an Imperial message to the Senate, providing definitely for the regency of the Empress Eugénie in event of the Emperor’s death, with a privy council including Princes Jerome and Napoleon as the Council of Regency on the accession of the Emperor Minor, as the Prince Imperial was styled in anticipation.

It is not likely that this constitutional change would have provoked any murmurs, even in a period of less enthusiasm in France for her ruler. But the measures threatened in the warning to “inciters to disturbance and organisers of conspiracies” on the 18th January might well have caused trouble. Now only the advanced Liberals had the courage to make any strong protest. A short, but real, reign of terror was inaugurated, and political suspects received little quarter. A “Law of General Security” was passed, giving the Government the right to proscribe its enemies without trial, condemning them either to banishment or to imprisonment. Not only those who

## 222 The Last Empress of the French

had already been implicated in disturbances, who should in future attack the Emperor or his family, etc., were liable to such punishments, but also those who might "attempt to hold the Government up to hatred or ridicule" or be implicated in other vaguely specified crimes. At the same time that the penal code was thus strengthened, a new office was temporarily created in the Ministry. General Espinasse, succeeding to the department of the Interior, was made also "Minister of Public Safety," Napoleon writing to him: "Do not by an inordinate moderation seek to reassure those who have been alarmed by your accession to office. They must fear you; otherwise your appointment would be without an excuse."

The total result of this reign of terror was the arrest of some four hundred persons, of whom three hundred were interned in Algeria. Orsini and Pieri were executed on the 13th March, the other two escaping with penal servitude. The Empress made strenuous endeavours to avert the death penalty. According to Dr Evans, "she appealed to everyone about her to aid her, until one day the Minister of the Interior, having heard of some new move she had made to obtain a reprieve, went to her and said, almost brutally: 'Madame, you do not know how much annoyance your silly sentimentalism is causing us. Let us attend to our business and occupy your-



self with your own affairs.”<sup>1</sup> Espinasse in this speech certainly showed no “inordinate moderation.”

A more notable result of the Orsini plot than either the constitutional change with regard to the regency or the stiffening of the penal code was the effect produced on the relations between France and Britain. The fact that the conspirators had concocted their plans in England, that they had but lately reached France from there when they attempted to execute them, and that one of their number was still at large in London caused a storm of passion to rage throughout France in January and February. Unfortunately considerable official support was given to the direction of the storm across the Channel. On the 20th January Walewski sent a remonstrance to the British Government asking how shelter could continue to be given to “men outside the common law and under the ban of humanity.” Three days later Persigny, receiving a deputation from the City of London to offer congratulations on the Emperor’s happy escape, spoke out very strongly what was in his mind on the subject of refugees. Further, the *Moniteur* committed the grave blunder of publishing the terms of some violent addresses to the Emperor from military men speaking on behalf of their regiments, demanding satis-

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *Memoirs* ii. p. 548.

224 The Last Empress of the French  
faction from "the land in which were the lairs  
of the infamous monsters who had attacked  
him." It is true that Walewski sent through  
the Embassy in London an apology for the  
indiscretion of the *Moniteur*. But the effect of  
the addresses was not thereby effaced in public  
estimation. The British Press took up the  
challenge vigorously, and on the reassembly of  
Parliament on the 8th February the signs of  
danger were gravely plain. No direct answer  
had been made to the French Foreign Minister's  
letter, although the Prime Minister and Lord  
Clarendon had already hastened to convey, for  
themselves and for the Queen, their detestation  
of the outrage and their sympathy with those  
who might have been its victims. On the second  
day of the session Lord Palmerston's Conspiracy  
to Murder Bill, often called the Refugees Bill,  
was introduced. The champions of the right of  
asylum were vehement against it and on the  
second reading an amendment proposed by Mr  
Milner Gibson was carried by 234 votes to  
215. This was on the 19th February. Lord  
Palmerston promptly resigned, to the consterna-  
tion of Persigny and the dissatisfaction of Napo-  
leon. Persigny had been talking in an agitated  
manner, from the beginning of February, about  
the imminence of war if no concession were  
made to French sentiment, and the accession to  
office of Lord Derby seemed to him to settle

matters. Napoleon also believed Derby to be hostile to himself, but he was determined that the peace should be kept. The newspaper war, however, was raging furiously. According to Greville, in England the French attacks seemed inspired rather by hatred of this country than by love for the Emperor, and it was thought, too, that Napoleon, with the knowledge he had of Parliamentary Government here, might have kept France more quiet. Neither country, as a matter of fact, was in a state to do justice to the other, and it was very creditable to those who conducted the affairs of both that they managed to avert a catastrophe. The Empress, as might be imagined, was ardently on the side of peace. Cassagnac records that she said to him, in Napoleon's presence: "Do not drive the Emperor into a war, I beseech you. England was our faithful ally in the East. A moment of unreason had led astray the English mind, usually so just. Good sense and equity will in the end prevail. Do not drive the Emperor into a war!"

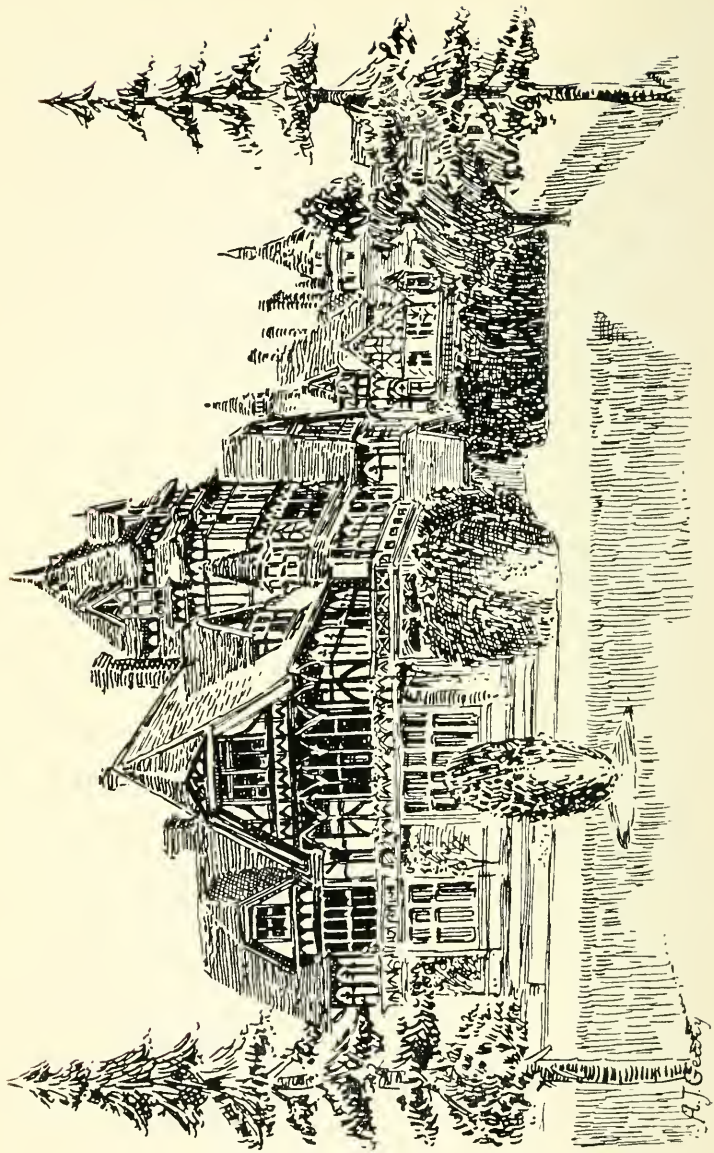
At first a happy issue looked impossible. The continued opposition of the Radical section of the House of Commons rendered it out of the question for Lord Derby to proceed with Palmerston's Conspiracy to Murder Bill. On hearing of this the excitable Persigny was roused to a state of frenzy. He pronounced war in-

226 The Last Empress of the French  
evitable. Suddenly, on the 16th March, the British Premier made a personal call at the French Embassy and congratulated Persigny on "the fortunate news." He was astonished to find that Persigny had not heard it. It was to the effect that the matter was settled. Walewski and Lord Cowley had arranged all in Paris. Persigny had every right to feel hurt. He wrote an indignant letter to Walewski and followed it up with a despatch to the Emperor, resigning his post in London. He did not think that his friend and patron would abandon him. Napoleon, however, forced to choose, could not throw over Walewski, who insisted on his acceptance of the resignation and himself sent off the brutal reply "*Votre démission est acceptée.*" The ill-used Persigny returned to France to tell the Emperor what he thought and to join forces with Prince Napoleon to undermine Walewski's position.

Persigny demands our sympathy, but, although he was an honourable man and a friend of England, his removal at this crisis was to the advantage of both countries. His successor Marshal Pelissier, Duc de Malakoff, though summed up by Greville as "a military ruffian who knows no more of diplomacy than he does of astronomy"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Greville is not just. The rough and rather grotesquely mannered Marshal, with the inappropriate Christian name of "Aimable," was a favourite butt of stories at the French





Farnborough Hill.

did much to save the situation, which once more became very dangerous when the acquittal of Bernard in April, on a charge of being implicated in the plot against the Emperor, was followed by a disgraceful demonstration in court. French indignation ran higher than before, and very naturally, seeing that even Napoleon and Walewski were firmly persuaded that Bernard had advocated the murder of the Empress and the Prince Imperial as well as of the Emperor. The "military ruffian," however, represented to his Government that Queen Victoria, her Ministers, and the better part of the British public were painfully impressed by the unjust verdict, and that the demonstration, he was assured, was the work of foreign refugees in England; and he advised "letting the water slip under the bridge." The advice was taken. The incident ended, but the understanding between the two countries was little more than an empty form now.

An attempt was made to disguise this unwelcome fact by the invitation to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to visit France again on their way to Coblenz. The invitation was issued in

Court, but his conduct of the French Embassy in London shows that he must have been a good astronomer if his diplomatic and astronomical qualifications were equal. His appointment to London was taken as a signal compliment by Queen and country and he was a popular Ambassador here when his country and its master were very unpopular.

228 The Last Empress of the French  
July, before the Emperor Napoleon made his memorable trip to Plombières. It was cordially accepted, and on the evening of the 5th August the yacht *Victoria and Albert*, escorted by six British warships, entered the harbour of Cherbourg, the appointed place of meeting. At eight o'clock the Emperor and Empress came on board, unaccompanied by any suite, and were met by Prince Albert at the foot of the ladder, by the Queen on deck. An absolutely private conversation followed in the saloon, Queen Victoria recording in her diary that the Emperor was much embarrassed, the Empress "less so and most kind." Questioned as to whether the anti-French feeling in England was still strong and whether an invasion was still expected, the Queen and Prince Consort smilingly endeavoured to reassure the Emperor, but spoke of the great harm done by the *Moniteur's* publication of the military addresses. Napoleon admitted the *Moniteur's* error, but said that the addresses had been published without his knowledge. The Prince Consort describes the Emperor as looking ill and being out of humour at all that was said about him in England—which cannot be wondered at. Lord Malmesbury, who accompanied the Queen and Prince, adds the information that both he and the Empress were unable to digest some articles in *The Times*, which had been offensive, especially against



her, and it was in vain that he tried to make them understand what freedom the Press had in England. After less than two hours Napoleon and the Empress left the royal yacht.

Next day the English visitors lunched at the prefecture of Cherbourg, and in the evening there was a dinner given by the Emperor on his yacht the *Bretagne*. At both meals the subject of the English Press attacks was discussed. The Queen says that, at dinner, "the Emperor unbent and spoke in his usual frank way to me. But he was not in good spirits and seemed sensitive about all that had been said of him in England and elsewhere." The proposing of toasts, the first occasion on which dangerous topics had to be mentioned publicly, was a painful ordeal to all. Napoleon, however, giving the health of his guests spoke cordially and asserted that "facts had proved that hostile passions, aided by certain unfortunate incidents, could change neither the friendship existing between the two Crowns nor the desire of the peoples to remain at peace." It was Prince Albert's duty to respond. Queen Victoria admits that she had a moment of torture, which she would not willingly have passed through again, as he rose; and during his speech she kept her eyes fixed on the table. But, with only one hesitation, the Prince Consort performed his difficult task. The Emperor shook

## 230 The Last Empress of the French

the Prince's hand in the cabin afterwards and over their coffee all four discussed the terrible nervousness which they had felt. Amid a demonstration of fireworks and an illumination in which the British fleet took part, the English guests left the *Bretagne*. Next morning they sailed from Cherbourg, while the Emperor stood on the poop of his yacht and waved his hand until they were out of sight.

The Cherbourg meeting reaffirmed the friendly feelings of the Royal and Imperial families, but it also served to show to what an alarming extent the separation between the two peoples had increased, and how difficult it was for their rulers to maintain the semblance of a genuine national understanding. It must be remembered, too, that the Prince Consort shared to a great extent the suspicions of the British public and Press against the Emperor. Such suspicions were hardly unnatural after the demonstrations following the Orsini outrage, seeing that considerable French military and naval preparations coincided with the anti-English outburst in the Empire. Napoleon had quite other objects in view than an invasion of Britain; but he could only credit to his underground diplomacy the misinterpretation of his views.

Queen Victoria's notes on the Cherbourg meeting contain her usual tribute to the Empress Eugénie. She speaks of her lilac and white silk

dress and black and white bonnet on the first evening and at the reception on the *Bretagne* before dinner remarks that she "looked lovely." It would surely be impossible to match such unwavering admiration of a royal lady for another anywhere in history.







The Empress Eugénie.  
From Painting by Winterhalter.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE EMPRESS'S FIRST REGENCY

THE event which immediately followed the reception at Cherbourg was a curiously dramatic preparation for the French action in Italy which was to make the year 1859 so celebrated. The Emperor and Empress made a journey through Brittany, the great stronghold of Roman Catholicism and Legitimism in their Empire. Had Napoleon been less sincere in his devotion to the "principle of nationalities," he surely must have been persuaded by this tour to cling to the position of Eldest Son of the Church. Nothing less than a triumph was experienced. Clerical support of the Emperor made the Bretons for the moment enthusiasts for the Empire, and the Empress, as religious as the Bretons themselves, became their idol. The Bishops gave the cue which clergy and people took up. At Quimper the Bishop, addressing the Empress, told her that her gracious presence reminded the inhabitants of the province of their beloved duchess—Anne of Brittany—whose royal husband had also been the Father of his People, and that her good deeds daily proved the truth of the assurance once given

236 The Last Empress of the French  
to them, that she was both Catholic and pious. The Bishop of Rennes was even more eloquent on the same text, and so pleased the Emperor that he elevated Rennes to an archbishopric as a reward. When the journey ended, after a fortnight, the clerical Press of France was full of eulogies of the sovereigns, and Napoleon stood at the highest point of favour with the Church. In a year he had reached almost the lowest. It is easy to imagine how painful was the change to Eugénie, the "doubly Catholic" as she called herself, Catholic both as a Spaniard born and as Empress of the French.

In October the Court went to Saint-Cloud for the marriage of the Duke of Malakoff with Sophia Valera de la Pañerga, a relative of the Montijo family. Malakoff was not a favourite of Napoleon, concerning whose military ideas he was supposed to hold a poor opinion. But the Marshal's success in the Crimea, where he won his title, and his services in London had made him a hero whose claims must be recognised. His wife is described as a pretty and graceful Spaniard, a great contrast to her short, rough, and unpolished husband. The match was attributed to the Empress, who had brought Mlle. de la Pañerga with her to Cherbourg with the idea that she might meet the French Ambassador from London. Malakoff fell in love at once, wrote verses—an incongruous hobby of



his—in her honour, proposed, and was accepted. They became regular attendants at Court, though Malakoff was naturally a retiring man, and are often mentioned in the memoirs of the period as guests at Fontainebleau and Compiègne.

To Compiègne the Court went this autumn for the usual entertainments. Among those invited to one of the “series” were Lord and Lady Palmerston, Lord Clarendon, and Lord and Lady Cowley. Palmerston and Clarendon, whose visit was much criticised in England, met at Compiègne Persigny, whose one great wish was to see Palmerston back in power again and to upset what he considered the anti-French administration of Lord Derby. There can be no doubt that Napoleon now discussed with Palmerston and Clarendon the application of the principle of nationalities to Italy. The idea was already spreading that the Emperor was contemplating war in the Peninsula—so much so, indeed, that it was thought advisable to put a paragraph in the *Moniteur* to the effect that “the Emperor’s Government feels compelled to caution the public concerning the results of a discussion calculated to change the relations of France with a friendly Power.” Napoleon himself very soon destroyed the effect of such pacific assurances.

The details of the intrigues which led up to the Italian War need not concern us here. Not

## 238 The Last Empress of the French

even the bitterest enemies of the Empress Eugénie have attempted to show her influence in bringing about the struggle with Austria. They have been obliged to admit her ignorance of her husband's plottings with Victor Emmanuel in 1855 and with Cavour at Plombières in 1858, for the reason that had she known she must have opposed his designs with all her strength. But Napoleon took sufficient care that she should not know. The Plombières conference he arranged with the help of his doctor, Conneau. No suspicion was aroused by a journey of Conneau to Turin in the summer of 1858; but Napoleon's agent went to inform the Sardinian King that the Emperor would be at Plombières, taking the waters, in July and would be glad if he met Cavour there. So it fell out. Napoleon was attending to his health (and this was no mere excuse) when Cavour arrived at Plombières on the 20th July, on his way to Germany for a holiday. The result was the famous interview which settled the fate of Italy. Victor Emmanuel on reading Cavour's report remarked: "In a year I shall be either King of Italy or merely M. de Savoie."

Very naturally, the *Moniteur* made no mention of the Emperor's doings at Plombières nor of the visit thither of the Italian Minister. Napoleon wrote to his wife only of his anxiety concerning the health of herself and "the little

## The Empress's First Regency 239

one"; of his fears lest she should be ill or the child should fall into the pond at Saint-Cloud; and of his happiness at the thought of seeing them both again. Then, on his return from the South, there was the English visit to Cherbourg and the Breton tour to occupy public attention. Nevertheless, suspicion was somehow aroused, and with the opening of the New Year it became changed to a feeling of certainty that a deep plot was in existence. At the Tuileries reception on the 1st January, in the course of the civilities to the diplomatic body, Napoleon spoke pointedly to Baron Hübner, the Austrian Ambassador, and in the hearing of all said: "I regret that our relations with your Government are not as friendly as they have been. Please tell the Emperor that my personal feelings toward him are unchanged." The sensation was immediately felt through France and the rest of Europe. It was increased by the circulation of a pamphlet entitled "Napoléon III. et l'Italie," urging a complete reconstruction in Italy, which was universally attributed to the Emperor himself; and by the announcement that a marriage between Prince Napoleon and King Victor Emmanuel's daughter (a condition on which the Emperor had insisted at Plombières) would take place at the end of the month. In France the thought of war caused extreme dissatisfaction, the Funds fell, and Prince Napo-

240 The Last Empress of the French  
leon's unpopularity was increased by the news  
of his political marriage. Anglo-French rela-  
tions sustained a fresh shock and the Emperor's  
once great favour with the British public was  
threatened with total extinction if he should  
prove to be a disturber of European peace.  
Queen Victoria wrote to Lord Malmesbury  
that "France might have all Europe against  
her, as in 1814-15," and it certainly looked as  
if this might be the case if Napoleon persisted  
in his Italian projects. Yet the remarkable  
result of it all was that, not without many  
misgivings, he did persist, that he had his way  
in spite of all Europe—including France—and  
that Europe, above all England, came to com-  
mend him for what he did in Italy.

Events now began to move rapidly. Victor  
Emmanuel opened the Sardinian parliament with  
a warlike speech. At the end of January the  
wedding between Prince Napoleon and the Prin-  
cess Clothilde was solemnised, on the eve of  
which some sort of agreement, if only a *pacte de  
famille* was signed. Austria attempted to get  
England's mediation, and Napoleon, who did not  
like the feeling displayed against him across the  
Channel, professed to be willing to see a Con-  
gress. At this point Cavour is credited with  
playing the trump card by threatening to resign  
his office and to make public the correspondence  
which had passed between him and the Emperor.

## The Empress's First Regency 241

Napoleon was not prepared to meet this threat, but fortunately for him he found the "reasonable pretext" for war which he had told Cavour would be necessary. On the 22nd April Austria called on Sardinia to disarm, and receiving a temporising reply crossed the Ticino a week later.

Information of Austria's ultimatum reached Paris on the Thursday before Easter. Everyone was already in a nervous state. The Empress was one of the foremost advocates of peace, and was very upset by the news, which all took to mean war for France. She forced herself to appear calm, and on Sunday went to pray at five churches, where amid the large congregations gathered for the celebration of Easter, sobs could occasionally be heard from those who had sons, near relations, or friends in the Army. The Army itself had not received the order to mobilise with any more enthusiasm than the people in general. But, as soon as it was heard that Austria had actually begun the attack on Italy, there was a revulsion of feeling. France rose warlike next day, writes the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher; Austria was the aggressor, and honour demanded blood. High spirits and confidence took the place of unwillingness and foreboding. The Emperor on the first announcement appeared "preoccupied but content," according to the Countess. He prepared

242 The Last Empress of the French  
to lead his troops in person, and war was declared  
in Paris on the 3rd May.

Now for the first time came into operation the regulations for the Empress's regency which had been made after the Orsini attempt. The Council which was to advise her was already appointed and it only wanted the Emperor's departure to see Eugénie Empress-Regent of France. The Emperor left Paris on the 10th May after a farewell mass in the Tuileries chapel, at which he was paler than was his wont and the Empress like a marble statue, absorbed in prayer. As she saw regiment after regiment leave and finally Napoleon himself, her eyes were swollen with tears, but she maintained an attitude of resolution and devotion. When all were gone she set herself in earnest to perform her work. Mérimée wrote to the Countess of Montijo that he found her daughter learning the Constitution by heart. Three times every week she presided over a Ministerial Council, entering into the business with such zest that she declared that the end of her regency would find her vexed at the loss of her present interests. In the evenings she gathered about her at Saint-Cloud her Court ladies to prepare lint for the wounded.

Of course the Regency of the Empress Eugénie has been ridiculed, it being represented that Napoleon merely allowed her to play an empty

## The Empress's First Regency 243

comedy, while in reality keeping all strictly under his own control. On the other hand, some have accused her of using her position to favour the reactionary and clerical party against its opponents. Between the two charges we may conclude that the Empress performed her task creditably within the limits allowed. The deputies, at least, took her rule seriously and on the Chamber's adjournment, before they separated to their homes on the 28th May, affirmed their loyalty to her, while asking to be allowed to see the Imperial heir. Her speech in reply was brief and to the point.

"Gentlemen," she said, "I am extremely touched by the wish which you have expressed to see the Prince Imperial before returning to your departments. I count on your enlightened patriotism to maintain there the faith which we have in the strength of the Army and, when the time comes, in the moderation of the Emperor. However difficult may be my duty, I have in my entirely French heart the necessary courage to enable me to do it. I rely then, gentlemen, upon your faithful support and on the aid of the whole nation who, in the absence of the ruler whom they have chosen for themselves, will never play false to a woman and a child."

News of successes was not long in arriving. The victory of Magenta was followed in Paris by a *Te Deum* and a general illumination. Some

244 The Last Empress of the French two weeks later came Solferino. It was on the 21st June at four A.M. that Napoleon's telegram announcing merely "Great battle, great victory," reached the Empress at Saint-Cloud. Impetuously she arose from bed, dressed, and was out in the grounds of the Palace to tell the tidings to the sentries. Another *Te Deum* was ordered at Notre Dame, and for the first time in his life the Prince Imperial appeared with his mother at a public ceremony. The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher records his answer when he was told he must be good during the service. He promised: "I will behave like the men and pray like the ladies"—which seems a very diplomatic answer for a child of three!

In connection with the Solferino *Te Deum* arose a difficulty which was ominous for the future. The Archbishop of Paris was most reluctant to officiate, though consenting at last. The reason was that the Austrians' defeat at Magenta and their withdrawal in consequence from the Papal territory had resulted in a rising in all the Legations and a throwing off of the Pope's rule. This interpretation by the Romagnols of the saying with which the Emperor Napoleon had left France, "Italy must be free from the Alps to the Adriatic," gave great offence to the Church's adherents in France as elsewhere, and suspicion grew fast now about the Emperor's real designs.



## The Empress's First Regency 245

Other news even more generally unwelcome and still more astonishing followed fast. France, reconciled to the war and delighted with Magenta and Solferino, heard with dismay of the meeting of Napoleon and Francis Joseph at Villafranca on the 11th July. Not knowing the motives which determined Napoleon's action, the people whom he had converted to warlike feeling were disgusted that a stop should be made when victory was in full flood and they were looking for the expulsion of the Austrians from Venetia as they had been driven from Lombardy. The Emperor saw that he could not expect a good reception at the present stage and, after signing the peace preliminaries at Villafranca, hastened back through France without giving time for any demonstrations. At ten o'clock on the morning of Sunday, the 17th July, he reached Saint-Cloud, where the Empress-Regent was awaiting him with the Prince Imperial and the Court. A mass was held at noon, *déjeuner* followed and then a reception in the Palace. Once more the Emperor is described as looking "calm and content," but it is evident that the mask was serving him well on this occasion.

Historians have abundantly discussed Napoleon's reasons for stopping short at Villafranca. The contemporary theory has been generally accepted, and it agrees with the excuse given by Napoleon himself to his Council and the two

246 The Last Empress of the French Chambers at Saint-Cloud two days after his return. "I found myself," he declared then, "obliged to attack in front an enemy entrenched behind his great fortresses, and in beginning a long war of sieges I was faced by Europe in arms, ready either to dispute our successes or to aggravate our reverses. It would have been necessary first to break down the obstacles thrown in our way by neutral territories and afterwards to accept a conflict on the Rhine as well as on the Adige." Another consideration which Napoleon did not think it advisable to tell the Council and Chambers was that fever and the two battles had already played havoc with the flower of his Army. Lastly, it was said that his humanity revolted against a continuance of the fighting; which seems perfectly true.<sup>1</sup>

France, as a whole, soon reconciled herself to the peace. The "Bonapartist craze of the masses," of which Montalembert complained, was not to be killed by an event which restored their

<sup>1</sup> Lady Cowley told Greville that Napoleon III. was "so tender-hearted that he could not bear the sight of pain, much less being the cause of inflicting it, and she had seen him quite upset after visiting hospitals at the sufferings he had witnessed there." Greville hereon reflects that Napoleon had, however, hundreds and thousands of people torn from their families and without trial sent to linger or perish in pestilential climates, evincing no pity or nervous sensations for *their* sufferings. (Memoirs, 13th July 1859.) Greville is, nevertheless, very pleased at the Emperor's "magnificent part" in concluding peace after Solferino.

## The Empress's First Regency 247

sons to them and gave hopes of the boast with which Napoleon III. founded his Empire being fulfilled. It was glory, not war, which had distracted them from preference for *la paix*. The return of the victorious troops from Italy in August was received with a heartiness for which the Emperor had not dared to look in the middle of July. The 14th August saw Paris decorated throughout with flags, draperies, triumphal arches, and figures of Victory holding golden wreaths. Before the Empress and her Court, seated in a grand stand on the Place Vendôme, rode the Emperor on horseback, while the regiments passed him one by one. Patriotic cries arose, showers of flowers fell on every side, and the height of all the enthusiasm was reached when Napoleon lifted up on the saddle in front of him the Prince Imperial, already clad in the blue and red uniform of the Grenadiers of the Guard. Dr Evans, an eye-witness, in his memoirs declares, perhaps with pardonable exaggeration, that at this instant "even the most irreconcilable enemies of the Government were carried away and, joining in the demonstration, threw flowers at the feet of the Emperor and his son, and cried out with all their might: '*Vive l'Armée! Vive la France!*'"

Such momentary splendours could not obscure the facts. While Europe in general ridiculed the terms of peace, especially the clause making the

## 248 The Last Empress of the French

Pope honorary president of the Italian confederation, the Sardinians furiously charged Napoleon with a gross breach of faith. Several of the Italian states refused to conform to the Villafranca agreement and its confirmation by the Treaty of Zürich was powerless to bind a protesting Italy. Napoleon proposed another Congress of Paris. Various difficulties were in the way of a Congress, and in its absence the Emperor allowed himself to be carried along in the direction which he secretly desired to take. This involved a definite attitude of hostility to the temporal claims of the Papacy, alienated the French clergy, and introduced complications not only in Napoleon's Ministry but in his own household. He did not shrink, however, from precipitating the storm. On the appearance at Christmastide of an anonymous pamphlet on "The Pope and the Congress," he was at once identified as the author. The devout were stirred to indignation by the advocacy of the restriction of the Pope's temporal rule to the territory immediately around Rome as best for the peace of His Holiness himself.<sup>1</sup> The French bishops un-

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon also wrote personally to Pius IX. on the 31st December pressing upon him the necessity of temporal sacrifices. The Pope, who at his New Year's reception had told the commander of the French garrison at Rome that he hoped the Emperor would condemn that "signal monument of hypocrisy," the just issued pamphlet, received the letter with very natural coldness.

## The Empress's First Regency 249

sparingly attacked the pamphlet and welcomed the Papal encyclical of the 19th January calling on the faithful to unite in defence of the Holy See. The laity proved as troublesome as the priesthood, and in the very Cabinet Walewski, at whom his enemies had rather unfairly sneered hitherto as being merely the portfolio on which his master wrote, declined to continue at the post which he had held for the past five years, if the Emperor admitted the authorship of the pamphlet. Napoleon accepted his resignation and replaced him at the Foreign Office by Thouvenel, formerly Ambassador at Constantinople, reputed to be able, industrious, and honest, and undoubtedly an enemy of the clerical party, if not an out-and-out supporter of the Emperor's Italian schemes.

Even worse than Walewski's defection was the opposition of the Empress. The hopes which the favours at the time of the Prince Imperial's birth and the tour in Brittany had inspired in her mind were shattered, and her strongest feelings were outraged when her husband exchanged the title of Eldest Son of the Church for that of enemy, which his clerical opponents freely bestowed on him. So bitterly hurt was she that she is reported to have declared that if the Pope were driven from the Quirinal she would leave the Tuileries. "I would rather see the Emperor dead than damned for ever!" Compelled to

250 The Last Empress of the French witness what followed, she exerted all her influence in the cause of her faith and from this time onward she certainly played a much larger political part than hitherto. She could not save the alienation of the Papal States, but she is credited with obtaining the maintenance of the French garrison at Rome—though it is doubtful whether Napoleon could have withdrawn his troops in any case—and she lent her fullest aid to the reaction which followed after the spoliation had been completed.

That spoliation proceeded apace after the appointment of Thouvenel to the French Foreign Office and Cavour's return to the post which he had abandoned in disgust after Villafranca. Napoleon agreed to the Sardinian annexation of Modena, Parma, and the Romagna, claiming in return Savoy and Nice, for which he had stipulated at Plombières and which should have been his already but for the breach of faith at Villafranca. After a diplomatic show of opposition to the transfer of "the cradle of the King's family," Sardinia now agreed to leave the decision to the inhabitants themselves. Savoy and Nice, which had been French up to 1815, voted by an overwhelming majority to become French again. The unhappy Princess Clothilde, wedded to a man with whom she had not a thought in common, made the bitter comment on her father's policy: "When the

## The Empress's First Regency 251

child has been sold, one may as well sell the cradle."

This aggrandisement of France, which made a bad impression in Europe, did not even succeed in producing the effect which it was designed to produce at home. It might act as some consolation to those who wished to know what France gained in return for the loss of so many men and so much money in 1859 and looked with dislike on the rise of a strong Italian neighbour. But it was no consolation to the outraged sentiments of Roman Catholics who, like the Empress, saw in it a reward for sacrilege which alienated the Church from France. Pope Pius was not slow to act. He at once excommunicated his Italian enemies, including King Victor Emmanuel, but contented himself with a withdrawal of his favour from the Imperial family of France. So marked did this become that, a few years later, a prominent French courtier paying his respects at the Vatican found Pio Nono apparently not at all interested in news of his godson and that godson's parents. A mild diplomatic remonstrance followed, and when next the courtier called the Pope said to him as he left: "You must tell our godson, the Prince Imperial, that we remember him—in our prayers."





A SEASON OF SORROW



## CHAPTER XIV

### A SEASON OF SORROW

APART from the mortification which the revelation of her husband's anti-Papal policy caused her, the Empress Eugénie found the year 1860 fraught with far more pain than joy. It may be called the most critical period of her career as Empress. Beginning with the events, already described, which drove her into active opposition to the desires of Napoleon and Thouvenel, his new Minister of Foreign Affairs, it brought her in its second half great domestic grief, from the effects of which she never completely recovered. At the same time it was a brilliant year, socially as well as politically, whereby the gloom of her heart was thrown into still stronger relief. Napoleon III., in the estimation of his biographers reached the summit of his power in 1860. Yet in the November of 1860 his wife was driven to hide her sorrow for a few weeks by exiling herself from France.

In the summer, after the usual entertainments at Saint-Cloud had come to an end, Napoleon planned the longest journey of his reign, a visit, in company with the Empress, to France's new

256 The Last Empress of the French acquisitions in the South and after them to Corsica and Algeria. It was suspected, and events amply proved the suspicion true, that he was anxious to be absent from the neighbourhood of his capital in order to cover his complicity with the designs of the Italian Liberationists, who had no mind to be restricted by the Treaty of Zürich. Between May and the middle of August Garibaldi conquered Sicily, and, at the very time when Napoleon was starting on his tour, he was marching on Naples to drive Ferdinand out. On the 7th September, when the "Dictator of Sicily" entered Naples, full of confidence that this was but the step which led to Rome, Napoleon was at the ancient Papal asylum of Avignon listening to the Archbishop's expressions of trust in the hand that protected the throne of Pius IX. in the Eternal City. Certainly it was diplomatic to be away from Paris at such a time.

Southern France entertained the Emperor and Empress with the utmost warmth of welcome. *Fêtes* and balls followed in rapid succession at Lyons, Chambéry, Avignon, Marseilles, and Nice, varied with a little mountaineering in Savoy by the Empress, who climbed the Montanvert on the back of a mule. Napoleon in the meanwhile was engaged in some of his most tortuous manœuvres. Having threatened Victor Emmanuel that, if

the Sardinian troops attacked the States of the Church without pretext, he must withdraw his Minister from Turin and intervene as an antagonist against his late allies, he witnessed two days later a Sardinian invasion of Umbria and the Marches. In another two days, on the 13th September, he withdrew his representative, as he had threatened; but he left a *chargé d'affaires* at Turin and continued on his journey to Corsica without taking the further step which his Ministers and the country expected. The former, including Thouvenel at the Foreign Office, who did not share all his master's views about Italy, were left almost entirely in the dark and after their indignant protests against Sardinia's violation of agreements found they could do nothing to support those protests. The Emperor cleverly circumnavigated a most dangerous point. But the embarrassment and disgust of his supposed advisers may well be imagined. Thouvenel, to relieve his feelings, took three days' holiday in the country. Thus, at any rate, he did the Emperor the compliment of imitating his example on a lesser scale; and he only returned to Paris in time to hear of the disastrous blow to the Papal army at Castelfidardo.

Leaving his Ministers to recover from the shock which he had dealt them, Napoleon reached Corsica with the Empress on the 14th

258 The Last Empress of the French  
September. It was his first visit, as it was hers, to the old home of the Bonapartes, and after the local authorities at Ajaccio had received them with municipal platitudes, a day was spent in visiting the house in the Place Letizia, with its relics of Madame Mère, and the tombs near by of her and her half-brother, Cardinal Fesch. Three days later they landed in Algiers, where a magnificent entertainment had been arranged by the officials and the Arab chiefs. The Arabs entered most heartily into the display in honour of the visitors, and the summit of all was reached when their leaders came forward to do obeisance to the Emperor and Empress. Eugénie, according to Fleury, who was in the Imperial suite, was especially flattered by the open admiration expressed by the Arabs when they gazed upon her. "The woman was uppermost in her," he writes, "and she found this homage all the more pleasant for being so artless and unexpected." When the day's festivities were over the Emperor began to break to her the terrible news which he had already known. With intended kindness he did not yet tell the whole truth; but it is doubtful whether her suffering was not really increased thereby.

When the Emperor and Empress left Marseilles, the Duchess of Alba was lying ill in Paris, at the newly opened Hôtel de l'Albe, built by the Empress for her sister and family

in the Avenue des Champs Elysées. She was known to be suffering from an incurable disease, but the doctors' bulletin that no immediate danger was to be anticipated had reassured Eugénie. Almost as soon, however, as the Imperial yacht reached Algiers, news was brought to Napoleon of her death, which had occurred on the 16th September. For fear that the Empress would be unable to bear up under the shock and so would ruin the programme and spoil the effect which it was intended to produce on the Arab chieftains, he only told her that the Duchess was seriously ill. Persuaded to perform her duties, Eugénie entreated that an immediate return should be made on the conclusion of the *fêtes*. When the yacht had sailed on the 19th of September she was allowed to hear the truth, and then by an additional cruelty of fate bad weather delayed the voyage so much that the funeral was over before Paris was reached. Eugénie was heart-broken. The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher gives a letter which she received from her at this time. "If you only knew all that I have suffered, the constant fear on the journey and during my stay in Algeria, and last of all the home-coming, to find an empty house and not even to have the consolation of embracing the lifeless body! All this shows in brief compass the price one must pay for exalted positions

260 The Last Empress of the French on earth. Often by trampling on one's very heart alone can one reach them."

It is impossible to doubt the bitterness of this sorrow or to question the crushing effect on the Empress Eugénie of her sister Francisca's loss. She surprised everyone about her by the depth of her feeling. She shut herself up in her rooms and cared to see no one at Court. But it is not correct to represent, as do some, that she insisted on an immediate retirement to Scotland. She did not, in fact, leave France until the middle of November, and on the 24th October we find Mérimée writing to his *inconnue* of a luncheon with Napoleon, Eugénie, and the Prince Imperial at Saint-Cloud the previous day, when the Empress was "full of enthusiasm over her visit to Corsica." The view that a combination of circumstances made her desire for a while peace and solitude seems to be correct. Two days after her sister's death the Papal forces under the French General Lamoricière, an Orleanist exile, had been utterly routed at Castelfidardo by the Sardinian troops and little now remained to the Pope outside Rome, itself secured only by the presence of Napoleon's garrison. The Emperor, in spite of his threats, had suffered Castelfidardo to come about without doing more than increase his small garrison. No satisfaction could be found by a devout daughter of the Church in such an attitude. Further, it



was universally believed at the time, and not repeated only by the scandalmongers, that proofs of her husband's unfaithfulness now forced themselves on the Empress's notice. We need not credit over-circumstantial tales of her consultation of lawyers<sup>1</sup> or of her returning to the Palace after what she took to be a public affront by the former "Madame Henriette" and, after a painful scene with the Emperor, insisting on leaving Paris. Such, no doubt, were the surmises of the day. The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher, devoted adherent of both husband and wife, admits that people, in utter astonishment at the Empress's sudden departure, connected it with the presence of the Countess of Castiglione at Court, but dismisses the report as untrue. Mérimée vaguely says that "the Empress's journey is causing a great deal of chatter, and no one can quite make out what it means."

Very few of Napoleon's greatest admirers attempt to maintain that his wife had not reason to complain, if she knew what others knew; and without seeking for the details of the present trouble we may rest content that there were aggravating circumstances in addition to her mourning which drove the Empress

<sup>1</sup> M. de Lano, for example, gives the story that, having taken long to suspect infidelity, the Empress, now that she was convinced of it, desired to know whether a separation was possible and consulted Jules Favre, who could only advise her to go home and do nothing, like many another wife.

262 The Last Empress of the French  
to leave a while her home. She decided to go on a journey to Scotland, including a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton, the latter being her husband's cousin, formerly Princess Marie of Baden. On the 14th November she left Paris, bidding good-bye to the Emperor at the Gare du Nord. She travelled *incognito* as the "Comtesse de Pierrefonds" and took with her only the Countess of Montebello, Madame de Saulcy, an equerry, and one of the Imperial aides-de-camp. She passed two days in London on her way to Scotland, stopping at Claridge's Hotel and avoiding any official recognition by the French Ambassador. As her presence in England could not be concealed, it was given out that she was in bad health and in search of a change of air. She did not entirely seclude herself, for on the second day she was out on foot shopping and in the afternoon she saw once more the Crystal Palace, where five years ago she and her husband had been the object of every eye.

From London she proceeded to Edinburgh, arriving on the 17th November; the first Royal lady of France to visit Scotland, it was observed, since Mary Queen of Scots three hundred years before. She took a deep interest in Mary Stuart, as in that other hapless Queen, Marie Antoinette, and now visited her relics at Holyrood. She could not escape publicity, in spite of her heavy mourning, and before she left

Edinburgh received an address from the Town Council, to which she made a brief reply of thanks in English. Killiecrankie and Stirling were next visited. If the Empress's determination to see Scotland had been prompted, as Baron Imbert de Saint-Amand says it was, by the thought that "the mists and fogs would be in harmony with the melancholy of her heart," she was satisfied, for the weather was prematurely wintry. Nevertheless, she continued her tour to Glasgow and Perth before she turned to the hospitality of the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton near the end of the month.

Hamilton Palace, the Lanarkshire home of her host and hostess, was even more gloomy than its wont in sympathy with their guest, according to the description given by the author of "In the Days of the Dandies." Lord Lamington, then only Mr Baillie-Cochrane, was a visitor at the same time as the Empress Eugénie. The excitement at the news of the Empress's coming was quite extraordinary, he writes.

"To my surprise, on my arrival at Motherwell I found not only the station blocked with people, but a dense crowd all the way from Motherwell to Hamilton Palace. The one anxiety was to obtain a glimpse of the Empress. On driving up to the door I found the whole establishment

264 The Last Empress of the French  
*en grande tenue*. On entering the drawing-room, there stood the Empress, with a black suite, all in the deepest mourning. There were not more than four or five visitors. Scarcely a word was said, and the effect was very melancholy; neither did the subsequent repast conduce to cheerfulness. The great dining-room had been darkened; though it was only three o'clock, the lights were subdued: so the repast was a very funereal one. The whole scene was suited to the Empress's frame of mind; she very talked little, and afterwards, in conversation with her *entourage*, it was impossible to gain any information. In fact, there was an air of profound mystery in the whole proceeding.<sup>1</sup> By the time the dinner, or rather luncheon, was over (and it lasted two hours), the crowd of people in the park was immense. It seemed as if the whole country had collected to stare, not at any grand procession or military display, but simply at a graceful lady, in deep mourning, who wore such a thick veil that not a feature was discernible."

Not only here but throughout her tour the Empress found the same anxiety to see her on the part of the crowd; and, embarrassing as this

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lamington adds that a friend wrote to him offering to tell him the two most confidential secrets entrusted to him lately, in exchange for that of the Empress's journey; but that, as far as he was concerned, that secret was like the knife-grinder's story—there was none to tell.

proved to her at the time, she was pleased at the welcome. At least she expressed to Lord Malmesbury two years later her delight with the journey in 1860.<sup>1</sup> Only in London could she escape unsolicited ovations. In Manchester she received another address from the Town Council, and in the smaller places the experiences of Motherwell were repeated.

The Empress, in spite of her *incognito*, did not leave England without seeing Queen Victoria. On the 10th December she was at Windsor, lunching with the Queen and the Prince Consort, before going to London for another two days. On the 13th December she returned to Paris, having been away only one day less than a full month, to find Napoleon embarked on another line of policy of which she disapproved, if not so vehemently as of his conduct toward Italy.

The courage shown by the Emperor at this period is undeniable. In 1859-60 he dispensed with clerical support in France in order to further his principle of nationalities. In January 1860 he published a letter from himself to his Finance Minister Fould, practically announcing his intention of making France a Free Trade country, and he followed this up by a commercial treaty with England. And now, on the 24th November, when the Empress was in Scotland, he issued a decree allowing the Chamber the right of draw-

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, Memoirs, 27th November 1882.







Count Morry.



Count Walewski



## CHAPTER XV

### THE LATER COURT

1860, as has been said, is commonly regarded as the year in which the Second Empire reached its highest point. Perhaps the period may be extended to cover 1860-63, the General Election at the end of the last of those four years and the events in Central Europe in 1864 giving significant proof of France's decline in domestic and foreign affairs. The early Sixties, too, were in social matters the years of greatest splendour. It is generally agreed among chroniclers of the Court of Napoleon and Eugénie that the advent to Paris, after the conclusion of the Italian War, of the Metternichs, had much to do with the development of the Court to its giddiest height. When we say the Metternichs, we either wrong or flatter the husband, for it was the wife, Princess Pauline Metternich, who was regarded alternatively as the leading spirit or the feminine evil genius of the Court. The Prince, since it was at Napoleon's special request that he was sent, at the early age of thirty, to represent Austria in Paris after the conclusion of peace, we must suppose to have had

270 The Last Empress of the French diplomatic gifts. In the memoirs of the time he appears as a tall, heavy, handsome man, with long fair whiskers, well dressed and as gallant in manner toward women as a watchful wife allowed him to be. Toward men his pose was one of dignified reticence, conscious of the high importance of the diplomatic career.

The Princess was born Pauline Chandor, daughter of an eccentric Austrian Count, and, like her husband, was about thirty years of age when she came to Paris. After her marriage with the Prince she had accompanied him to Venice, where she made no small sensation in society. It was Paris, however, which gave her a real opportunity of showing her talents, and she was not slow to take it. She was not a beauty. In fact, she was what was known as *une jolie laide* and described herself as the *singe à la mode*, a very happy phrase according even to friendly critics. If she had simian features, however, she had also golden hair, a slim figure, and shoulders of which she made an abundant display. Her diamonds were remarkably fine, and her dresses charming, original, and expensive. Although she was well supplied with money by her husband, she was said to have left Paris on the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War heavily in debt to Worth.

Still, the Princess Pauline did not rely on dresses or diamonds to produce her effects.

Her note was originality in mind, as well as in costume. She danced well, sang well, talked well, was always laughing and was full of quaint ideas. The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher is obliged to admit that there was a touch of the Palais Royal about her. People flocked to her entertainments, and her Thursdays were wont to finish up with a smoking-concert at which the hostess smoked like a trooper and sang songs of somewhat doubtful character, which she was reported to learn from a popular music-hall artist. Mérimée thought her "quite an odd mixture of *lorette* and *grand dame*." Nevertheless, the Princess, said Society, never crossed the Rubicon. It is evident that this Rubicon was a river of shifting course.

The possession of brains could not be denied to her by her enemies. Even in music the *café chantant* did not deafen her to better sounds. She was one of the earliest adherents of Wagner. She brought her influence to bear upon Walewski to permit the first performance of "Tannhäuser" at the Opera in 1861, and while people around her box were muttering that this was "Austria's revenge for Solferino" the Princess within was trying to save the reputation of the audience by enthusiastic applause.

Among her virtues was devotion to her husband. Her friends were surprised at the way in which she managed him, but she was sufficiently

## 272 The Last Empress of the French

frank in her explanation to convince them that he was faithful. The Prince made no attempt to restrain his wife's originalities beyond a languid utterance of "*Aber, Pauline!*" when she was more than usually daring, after which he returned to the dignified contemplation of his diplomatic glory. So Pauline continued on her way, to her own amusement and the admiration of the Court. The Empress Eugénie had welcomed her from the beginning, seeing in her a sworn foe to dullness, the terror of Courts. There were even certain superficial resemblances in the characters of Empress and Princess. Both had taste in dress, vivacity of manner, and a craving for amusement. The relationship between the two, however, was much exaggerated. The very etiquette of the Court did not allow the Empress to be so intimate with anyone as she was represented to be with the Princess Pauline. It would perhaps have been better for her name if she had been less so than she actually was, even if we regard the Princess's vagaries as comparatively harmless. But Eugénie, having once conceived a liking for her, was not disposed to abandon it lightly, in spite of several shocks which Pauline did not hesitate to give to her dignity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For instance, there is the only too often quoted story of the advice which the Princess Metternich gave that a certain short skirt should be worn by the Empress and Court ladies on holiday excursions. "You would not advise your own

The Emperor, on the other hand (although malice coupled his name with the Princess Metternich's as with that of almost every lady at Court) did not care for the influence of the brilliant Austrian over his wife and those that surrounded her. But he took no steps to combat it, and appeared with the Empress at the official at-homes of the Prince and Princess. *L'Ambassadrice*, as she was called, established herself as the brilliant star of the constellation of women which made the Court so famous. This period in Paris has been described as the Age of Woman. Woman reigned, and the emblem of her authority was the crinoline, which the Empress Eugénie had made popular. Time has reduced the memory of most of those who shone then to mere names, with which we may couple perhaps a vision of ringlets and a monstrous hoop. Few among the Duchesses of Bassano, Cadore, Persigny, and Malakoff, the Countesses Walewski, Castiglione, Morny, Portalès, and Mercy-Argenteau, and the other titled ladies had great claims to distinction, though most of them had pretensions to good looks.<sup>1</sup>

Empress to wear such a skirt," remonstrated a French lady afterwards. "No, but my Empress was born a Princess," was the answer, "yours was only Mlle. de Montijo."

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, however, writes on the 27th October 1862 that "the *genre* of the women [about the Empress], with the exception of Madame Walewski, is vile. Their hair is dragged off their faces so tightly that they can hardly shut their eyes,

## 274 The Last Empress of the French

Of them the most remarkable certainly was the Countess Castiglione, a Florentine by birth and a niece of Cavour. In a different way she made as much sensation at Court as the *singe à la mode*, but unlike the Princess Metternich she was less appreciated by the Empress than by the Emperor.

The Countess Castiglione was very young when she came to France. Only born in 1840, Virginia Oldoini married at the age of fifteen one of King Victor Emmanuel's equeries. Her arrival in Paris, in spite of her youth, showed her beauty fully developed. An admirer described her as "a woman whom Greece would have deified and reserved as a model for Pheidias or Praxiteles." The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher is less amiable than usual in this instance. She does not deny the Italian's beauty, but says it was of body not of soul, the beauty of an *objet d'art* which leaves the heart untouched. The lady had the gift, however, of attracting all regards; "it needed virtue to resist her, and virtue was not the point on which men prided themselves" in the circles where she triumphed. Her pride in her loveliness led her to exhibit it as much as possible—as if to prove that she was altogether lovely, adds her critic. and their scarlet accoutrements, jackets, cloaks, etc., as they happen to be very fair, made an *ensemble* indescribably unbecoming." This was on the occasion of a hunting excursion, of course.

At Walewski's ball, it will be remembered, people climbed upon chairs to take advantage of the display. This weakness of "*la belle Castiglione*," however, was made a subject of jest which offended her. When it was known that she had consented to take part in some *tableaux vivants* she received anonymous letters recommending her to take as model "*La Source*" of Ingres—a nude. In her wrath she appeared as a hermit, wrapped in a cloak which left not even her face visible. There is a curious suggestion in this of her end, for, as her beauty decayed, she shrouded herself entirely from public view, shut herself up in a house where no mirrors were allowed, and ultimately died in solitude.

Perhaps the most famous beauty of the Court, next to the Empress, the Countess Castiglione was credited with political designs also and with using her influence with the Emperor in the interests of her uncle Cavour. Whether or not he allowed her to talk politics to him, Napoleon did not disguise his admiration for her physical charms.

The amusements of the Court of the Second Empire attained an undue contemporary notoriety owing to the unrestrained licence of gossip which had prevailed in the early days of the reign and was even more noticeable now. It would be grossly unfair, where this gossip is preserved in

276 The Last Empress of the French  
a certain class of memoirs, to treat what is merely the equivalent of a low type of society journalism as if it were history. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there were occasions when the censors, genuine or pretended, had good ground for their severity. The Court included many whose characters were not concealed by their talents or their looks. Men like Morny, women like *la belle Castiglione*, and worse than they, could not bring honour on those with whom they associated; and it cannot cause wonder that people credited them with the sentiment of Madame de Longueville under Louis XIV.: “*Que voulez-vous? Je n’aime pas les jeux innocents.*”

The great entertainments were the *fêtes* at Compègne or Fontainebleau; the hunting-parties, with the Empress ever at the front and often in at the death; the galas on the lake, with Mérimée, Court poet, reciting his verses in a boat to the Empress and her ladies; and, above all, the Court balls when Emperor and Empress were in Paris. The most celebrated of these balls, owing chiefly to an exploit of an Imperial lady, was that in fancy dress given at the opening of the Hôtel d’Albe in April 1860. Several descriptions of this remain, among them one in Mérimée’s letters. “The costumes were very fine,” he writes, “and there were plenty of pretty women present who proved conclusively how



bold an age this is. Their dresses were outrageously short, both above and below, and I was able to see any number of pretty legs and many a garter, too, while they were waltzing." There was a ballet of sixteen ladies, all very fair, in short skirts and blazing with diamonds. Half of them represented Naiads and were powdered with silver which fell on their shoulders like dew-drops, while the others were Salamanders, sprinkled with gold-dust. The supper-room, with its pictures, its attendants in sixteenth-century costume, and its brilliant illumination, reminded Mérimée of Belshazzar's feast in Martin's picture. All the Court was there, the Empress in white velvet with a black domino, easily recognised by all, and the Emperor vainly trying to disguise his identity by a frequent change of costume.

The sensation of the evening, even among the short skirts which struck Mérimée so much, was the appearance of the Princess Mathilde. The Princess was not fond of balls, but she wished at least to be an artistic success, and she went as an Egyptian fellah woman, with her skin appropriately dyed. As she entered the ballroom, a shock ran through the Imperial family. Everyone else crowded to look at her, and voices were heard asking her lady-in-waiting "Did you paint your mistress?" The question is not surprising to us when we read Lord Malmesbury's entry.

## 278 The Last Empress of the French

“Her dress,” he says, “was of the scantiest, very *décolletée*, her arms bare up to the shoulders, with a narrow band by way of sleeve, fastened with a brooch. The body was slit under the arm to the waist, showing her skin. The drapery behind was transparent, which she probably was not aware of, as she had not dyed her skin in that particular place, and the effect was awful.” The Empress managed to disguise her feelings, but the Princess Clothilde was so affected by her sister-in-law’s display that she refused to go to another fancy-dress ball after this.

The Princess Clothilde was drawn by her marriage with the Emperor’s cousin into uncongenial surroundings and demands pity for that; but she is hardly a sympathetic figure. Her reply was not gracious to the Empress’s kind attempt to reassure her on her arrival in Paris. “Be at ease, dear, you will soon feel at home in my Court,” said Eugénie. “I am quite at ease, Madame,” replied the Princess, “and have been accustomed since birth to my father’s Court.” She was as devoted a Roman Catholic as the Empress herself, but of a type very different from the Spanish. Clothilde’s whole life, except when her household duties employed her, was given up to religious practices, in spite of the continual remonstrances of Prince Napoleon. She wearied with her church-going her ladies, who unfortunately were not of her choosing.

Her own favourites could not tolerate Prince Napoleon, and she was obliged therefore to take the wives or relatives of the Prince's friends, who were naturally not devotees. The Prince, disgusted as he was at her piety, admitted her good sense, asked her advice, even spoke respectfully of her—and was consistently faithless as a husband.

If the Princess Clothilde's propriety was shocked by costume balls, it was the minor amusements of the Court at which less sincere critics aimed their attacks. Of the *tableaux vivants*, arranged by Viollet-le-Duc, and the charades they made reprehensible exhibitions, and of the drawing-room games frantic revels. As has been suggested in an earlier chapter, they did not themselves believe their own stories; the object was not to tell the truth but to raise a smile and ruin a Government. Perhaps there was an excessive freedom of subject in the charades, for we find the Countess Stéphanie de Tascher writing as early as 1856 of Count Bacciochi, superintendent of the amusements at the Tuileries, yielding to his natural inclination to Gallic salt and setting before the grave diplomatists of Europe (gathered for the Congress of Paris) the joyous humour of the Palais Royal. At that time the Empress was seldom present, for her *accouchement* was near. The Emperor listened with his usual thoughtful and

280 The Last Empress of the French  
reflective expression, but occasionally broke out  
into a hearty laugh. Milder productions seem  
to have prevailed later and the fashion of play-  
ing original drawing-room comedies sprang up,  
Morny setting an example as author which others  
followed.

As for the games which excited wrath parti-  
cularly in Royalist circles, they were of the  
foolish, harmless kind of which we have already  
spoken in connection with the Empress's *lundis*.  
If the Empress had a liking for blind-man's buff,  
if the Emperor consented on occasions to join  
in with his guests who shared her liking, we may  
surely look without too great severity on the  
relaxation of those whom etiquette had made to  
ache. The volatile spirits of the Empress were  
impatient under the long restraint. On occasions  
they betrayed her into even wilder excesses than  
blind-man's buff. Again we must have recourse  
to the pages of the Countess Stéphanie de  
Tascher for the story of what followed the  
hunting excursion to Rambouillet. The hunt  
over and, dinner at the chateau finished, all  
clamoured for children's games. Even Napoleon  
was infected with the spirit of the evening, and  
they played the usual pranks. At the end the  
Empress suddenly produced from her pockets  
handfuls of flour and scattered it over the rest  
of the company. Clearly she had found it im-  
possible to crush all the mischief of her girlhood

at the bidding of etiquette. Another story is told of an escapade at Biarritz, when she and a few others concealed themselves behind the wall in front of an empty house and hit unsuspecting passers-by with switches, until one irate victim thought of breaking into the house, whereon the guilty parties with some difficulty got over another wall in time to avoid detection. A better known tale is that of her bet with Colonel Verly of the *Cent Gardes*, that specially selected and gorgeously uniformed corps which prided itself on its immobility when on duty. The Empress was sure she could spoil this boast and backed her opinion with a wager. Walking in company with the Colonel, she did her best to attract the attention of a *garde* standing on duty. At last, anxious to win her bet, she walked up to the man and boxed him on the ear. He did not move, and when the Empress sent him an intended compensation he gallantly returned it, saying the Empress's hand had already honoured him.

Such acts as these cannot be defended as dignified; but they certainly give a very human touch to the Empress's picture. Without such reminders that she was still at heart the Eugenia de Guzman who had startled Madrid, it would lack definiteness, and we might be inclined to agree with a writer who compared the Empress to a brilliant rainbow tinted by the sunshine

282 The Last Empress of the French of the Second Empire but not part of anything around her.

It was not a contemporary complaint of Napoleon's Ministers that the Empress was too detached from things about her. On the contrary, they thought, and sometimes said, that she took far too much part in affairs. She is reported to have opened accidentally on one occasion a letter from Persigny complaining to the Emperor of his submission to feminine influence — a point on which Persigny had spoken to him plainly before. As the Empress and Persigny were always on bad terms, the discovery of this letter made little difference. Remonstrances at any rate did not affect the Emperor's ideas. He intended that his wife should be able to fill the office which she might be called upon to hold, if he should die suddenly, of Regent to the Emperor Minor. So it is not altogether just to speak of the Empress "meddling" in affairs, as for instance does Sir M. E. Grant Duff in an interesting note on her about this time. He says:—

"The Empress is the reverse of stupid, but has had a very imperfect education, and is a devotee of the Spanish type, which is far worse than the French and has much less of personal piety in it. Mass at the Tuileries is a sort of transaction with very little religious fervour. She is brave and would show very well indeed

if she had to dare anything in the streets of Paris, but she meddles in affairs, and is often just the make-weight that inclines the Emperor—who likes a quiet life—to wrong decisions.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Leaves from a Diary,” 7th April 1863.





THE EMPRESS POLITICIAN



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE EMPRESS POLITICIAN

THE early Sixties were full of events in the political world which, although not directly affecting France, had an important influence upon the Empire's position in Europe. The proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in March 1861 only registered an accomplished fact, but it called general attention to the existence on France's south-eastern frontier of one strong neighbour in place of a number of weak ones. Partly through Napoleon's active help and partly with his connivance only, the former Sardinia had become an United Italy, only Venetia, Rome, and the last fragments of the Papal territory remaining outside its bounds. A modification of French policy now became apparent. Already in the autumn of 1860, in consequence of Garibaldi's exploits, a French army of observation had been posted on the Italian frontier. Whether the change was at all connected with the death of Cavour in the June following his master's proclamation as King of Italy, which robbed Napoleon of his trusted "accomplice," or whether it was

288 The Last Empress of the French caused by the growing strength of the clerical party, it was marked by the disappearance of the anti-Papal Thouvenel from the Ministry of Foreign affairs and the return of Drouyn de Lhuys, now Foreign Minister for the fourth time. Rumour implicated the Empress in the change. She was at least exceedingly interested in it, having protested against Thouvenel's appointment from the first. Lord Malmesbury records an hour's conversation with her, chiefly on the Roman question, just after Thouvenel's fall. "The Empress did not, as I expected," he writes, "treat the subject as a *dévoté*, though she said that no scandal could be greater than an exiled Pope with no foot of earth belonging independently to himself, and that the honour of France was engaged to protect him from being driven out of Rome; that if he were the Austrians would come to his rescue, and France would have no right to prevent it, as by the treaty of Zürich with Austria the Pope was to be maintained; that the Italians should be satisfied, for the time, with what they had got, and not attempt impossibilities, but organise what they possessed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, *Memoirs*, 27th October 1862. Mérimée in the month before records a "regular pitched battle" at Biarritz between the Empress and himself on the Roman question, she speaking with vivacity but without anger. "The discussion came to an end through our throats being tired and there was profound silence for eight or ten minutes,

It must not be supposed that the Emperor in any way altered his opinion as to the desirability of depriving the Pope of his temporal power. Two years after Thouvenel's dismissal, and while Drouyn de Lhuys was still at the Foreign Office, we find Napoleon entering into a compact with Victor Emmanuel to withdraw the French garrison from Rome, a step which could only have one result; and in December 1866 he carried out the terms of the compact, disregarding the entreaties of the Empress and her prophecy: "You may call it what you will, instinct, presentiment, or superstition. I am convinced that my son will not mount the throne if we forsake the Holy Father." Garibaldi's failure in the following year left Napoleon no alternative but to disavow him (as did Garibaldi's own sovereign); but what concessions he made to the clericals were due to necessity, not to choice. He had still to steer a very difficult course, and the support which he got in his own country aggravated his difficulties. Prince Napoleon, the most vehement champion of anti-Roman schemes, was a compromising ally for his cousin. Taking advantage of the greater freedom of speech resulting from the decree of the previous November, he gave a brilliant after which I thought she was more than ordinarily attentive to me; evidently to show me that she was not angry. She even asked Madame de Rayneval whether she thought I was hurt, a trait eminently characteristic of her, as you know."

290 The Last Empress of the French

oratorical display in the debate in the Senate following the Speech from the Throne in 1861. Setting forth boldly his own free-thinking views and eulogising the policy of an United Italy, he proceeded to a severe attack on the various parties in France. Carried away by his magnificent delivery, the Senate applauded him loudly ; but as soon as the oration appeared in print there was an outcry. The Prince was not only denounced in France itself. The exiled Duke of Aumale, taking up the defence of the Royalists, issued an open "Letter on the History of France," of which fifteen thousand copies were scattered through the country before the police could take action. While vindicating his own party, the Duke made a violent counter-attack on the man who had "left the Crimea too early, as he had reached Solferino too late." Public opinion decided that Prince Napoleon must challenge the opponent who called him a coward. The Prince, however, declined to issue a challenge for a duel. He remarked that it was unpleasant to fight with one who had in his pocket *la corde du pendu*. This bitter allusion to the fact that Aumale had inherited the fortune of the old Duke of Condé, whose body was found hanging from his bedroom window in Louis Philippe's reign, either murdered or having committed suicide after a disgraceful intrigue with the adventuress Madame Feuchère,

did not strike public sentiment as satisfying the demands of honour. It was considered that Aumale was correct in branding the Prince as a coward. His nickname of "Plon-plon" was temporarily changed to "Craint-plomb," and it was sneeringly remarked that he might have been expected to show more courage, seeing how familiar he was with *des lions*—a delicate allusion, in the style of the Prince's own wit, to his intimacy with the notorious Anna Deslions. Prince Napoleon, according to the amusing description of the Countess Stéphanie, simply wrapped himself in the toga of a great citizen, victim of the boldness of his own speech. But at Court as elsewhere he was under a cloud. The Empress, all her notions of honour outraged, deliberately turned her back upon him when they first met after his refusal to fight. Her attitude was universally approved, a rare occurrence indeed, though in the next year the same good fortune befell her a second time.

It was now only natural that the Empress's conduct should attract great attention. Her growing interest in politics was well understood, and the tendency was more and more to attribute to her every action a hidden meaning. An example of this was what happened early in 1862. Eugénie had gone to Biarritz, out of her usual season there, for reasons of health, and conceived the idea of making a trip thence to

292 The Last Empress of the French  
Lisbon, Gibraltar, and Cadiz, and so back to  
France at Marseilles. With her usual impulsive-  
ness, she insisted on putting her plan into effect  
at once and started off with no more than a  
small suite in attendance. She had paid no  
official visit to Spain since she had left the  
country as a subject, and not a favoured sub-  
ject, of its Queen. But Isabella was anxious to  
make amends and invited her sister sovereign  
to Madrid. Eugénie accepted and, arrived to  
be treated with all the honours which could be  
lavished upon her. She took Madrid by storm.  
An interesting description of her appearance at  
this time has been preserved, written by the  
United States representative in Madrid then.  
He says:—

“The Empress has the figure of a girl, the  
very model of a Hebe. Her bust, neck,  
shoulders, arms, and especially her hands are  
incomparably beautiful, and she has the grace  
of an Andalusian *danseuse*. . . . And then her  
dress! The ladies contemplated it in silent awe,  
and even grave diplomatists were in raptures  
about the arrangement and adorning of her hair.  
Perhaps for an Empress she was too much of a  
coquette, but as an Andalusian, which she is,  
and looked upon simply as a woman, she was  
the most perfect creation I have seen any-  
where.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The same writer describes the Countess of Montijo, far



This visit to Madrid, so great a personal triumph for the Empress Eugénie, was attributed, as soon as the idea of raising the Archduke Maximilian to the throne of Mexico was talked about, to her interest in that scheme. Everything seems to point to it being rather the prompting of one of the sudden whims for which she was celebrated. However, she was duly blamed on this ground also, people being shocked at the impropriety of an excursion to the Spanish capital without the full Imperial retinue. She must be wrong, whatever her motive.

Events conspired to make the Empress take a more active interest in domestic as well as foreign politics. Two causes in conjunction were tending to alter the character of the Imperial Government. One was the growth of the Parliamentary Opposition. At the General Election of 1863 the total number of anti-Government candidates successful was only thirty-five, it is true, against two hundred and forty-nine Government nominees. But previously there had been only five; and now Paris returned none but Opposition members. The other cause was that death was depriving the Emperor of his old

on in the sixties but still showing that she must have been beautiful, sitting opposite her daughter at Queen Isabella's dinner-table, "sunk in contemplation" of the wonderful sight, crumbling a large roll of bread and without the slightest conception of what she was eating or drinking.

294 The Last Empress of the French advisers. In 1864 Mocquard died, a man of whom we do not hear much; but he was the chief of the inner cabinet of the Emperor and from the days of the *Coup d'État* of which he was one of the organisers, was in his master's fullest confidence. He has been described as witty, gay, and original, but his enemies impugned his integrity. Napoleon's short sad verdict, "*C'était mon ami,*" was perhaps the best tribute to his memory. He was followed in the March of 1865 by Morny, only created a Duke three years before. He was ailing at the beginning of the year and was unable to preside over the opening of the Legislative Body. No immediate result was anticipated by the doctors to his illness, but a drive in the Bois on Shrove Tuesday had fatal effects. The Emperor and Empress visited his bedside, the Archbishop of Paris spent an hour with him, and on the 10th March the "evil genius" of the Second Empire, after an edifying death-bed, passed away amid the eulogies of his admirers.

It was thus with an internal political situation much changed since 1859 that the Empress Eugénie took up her second Regency in May 1865. The Emperor had decided to pay a visit to Algeria, and left the Empress in his place, with Prince Napoleon, his reputation partly mended since 1861, as Vice-President of the Privy Council. A more unwelcome adviser to

Eugénie could not have been found; but the Prince soon relieved her of his presence. Entrusted with the task of unveiling at Ajaccio a statue of Napoleon Bonaparte surrounded by his four brothers, he seized the opportunity of making one of his devastating speeches, attacking principles, parties, and nations on behalf of his own views of Bonapartist republicanism. The sensation was far greater than it had been in 1861, and the Emperor considered himself bound to intervene. A letter was published in the *Moniteur*, written in Algiers on the 23rd May and addressed to Prince Napoleon personally. "In leaving you during my absence," it ran, "by the side of the Empress and my son, I wished to give you a proof of my friendship and confidence, and I hoped that your presence, conduct, and language would bear witness to the harmony of our family." Then, after stating that the Prince's political programme could only be of assistance to the enemies of the Government, and paying a tribute to the First Napoleon ("Can we pygmies appreciate at its true value this great historical figure?") the letter concluded: "It is clear to the sight of all men that to check intellectual anarchy, that detestable enemy of true liberty, the Emperor [Napoleon] established, first in his own family, and then in his government, that severe system of control which allowed but one will and one

296 The Last Empress of the French execution. Henceforward I shall not depart from this same line of action."

Prince Napoleon, careless as he was of public opinion, was intensely proud, and he answered this letter by resigning the Vice-Presidency of the Council. After the end of the Imperial visit to Algeria there was a painful interview, the Emperor, as has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, losing his self-control and letting his angry voice be heard over the Palace. The Prince was reduced to such fury that on his return home he smashed a valuable vase to pieces. For some time he remained entirely out of public life; but his political instincts were too strong and before the end of the following year he was found engaged in the combination which turned Drouyn de Lhuys out of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He never regained, however, quite the same place in his cousin's esteem, and his misconduct was doubtless an additional incentive to the Emperor to put confidence rather in his wife Eugénie than in one who proved himself so unworthy of trust. After the termination of her second period as Regent of France, he granted to her the right to attend at Council meetings when she desired. She made use of her privilege, and brought into the deliberations a new and sometimes rather disturbing element, it would seem. She is described by the Minister Pinard as listening usually in silence, but, if

her interest was stirred, breaking out in spite of herself into eager language which made her hearers realise that "there was an exuberance of life in her which contrasted with the sobriety of language and meditative countenance of the Emperor."

The autumn visit to Biarritz in 1865 was invested with unusual importance. The Emperor, contrary to his general custom, made it the occasion of an important political plot. Among the guests accepting his and the Empress's hospitality at the Villa Eugénie was Count von Bismarck, who had been recalled from the Paris Embassy by the King of Prussia in 1862 to become the head of his Government, and who had since then steered Prussia through the intricate diplomacy of the combination with Austria against Denmark and was now preparing to rob the other spoiler of her share of the prey. He required, before Prussia could go to war with Austria, an assurance of the neutrality of Napoleon, who, though apparently undecided as to the application of the principle of nationalities to the Schleswig-Holstein question, was not satisfied with the gains of the German Powers at the expense of Denmark and was likely to be still less pleased at further Prussian aggrandisement without any compensation for France. There was, however, no written agreement at Biarritz any more than at Plombières. The Emperor under-

298 The Last Empress of the French stood that Prussia would consent to a territorial recompense for France in event of her own success against Austria. But, as the Luxembourg affair subsequently showed, he found no second Cavour in Bismarck. Whether he expected Luxembourg or something more—Belgium, for instance, or a frontier on the Rhine—from a grateful Prussia, he was totally disappointed. He received nothing at all and had no means of putting pressure on the astute Prussian Minister.

The result for Prussia from the Biarritz conspiracy was seen before many months had passed. In April she concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with Italy. In May there was talk first of war, and then of a Conference. France, Britain, and Russia indeed invited the holding of a Conference, but, while Prussia and Italy declared their readiness, Austria, ill advised as ever throughout her history in the nineteenth century, imposed conditions which the others could not accept. On Austria further desiring to appeal to the German Federal Diet Prussia dropped pretences. On the 12th June diplomatic communications between Berlin and Vienna ceased, and in three days Prussia was addressing demands to Austria's German friends, followed by an invasion of Hanover and Hesse-Cassel.

The Countess Stéphanie de Tascher draws a picture of the Empress Eugénie's *lundi* on the eve of the Austro-Prussian War. There was a

dance to entertain the guests. All the diplomatasts were present, and the Emperor seemed to derive some amusement from the anxiety with which he was watched as he conversed, first with Goltz, the Prussian, then with Metternich, the Austrian, and finally with Nigra, the Italian Ambassador. In the meantime the Empress Eugénie was flitting about, constantly exclaiming to one person or another "We do not want war! Why make it?" As for the guests, they were asking among themselves whether the struggle was about to begin, and everywhere amid the music of M. Strauss's band could be heard the refrain: "Shall we have war?"

"We do not want war! Why make it?" That such was the Empress's cry there is no reason for doubting. Nevertheless, there must also be noticed the statement of Thiers to Prince Chlodwig von Hohenlohe<sup>1</sup> that Eugénie, with the entire Bonapartist party, was of opinion that war was necessary to restore Napoleon's prestige and that she declared: "My son will never reign if prestige is not restored by a victorious war." Like others in similar positions, the Empress Eugénie must occasionally have used speech to conceal thought. If the words "We do not want war! Why make it?" were not the expression of her real convictions on this occasion, at least her reputation for foresight

<sup>1</sup> Hohenlohe Memoirs, II. 120 (English Edition).

300 The Last Empress of the French gains at the expense of her sincerity, for if war between Prussia and France was inevitable it would have come better for France in 1866 than in 1870. And, after all, it is her consistency rather than her sincerity which is impugned. To dislike war, yet advocate a war, is not an uncommon phenomenon, even among those usually held sincere.

The Emperor was prompt with his announcement of neutrality. He added that France would only look for a territorial increase for herself in event of alterations in the map in favour of one of the hostile parties. He would not consider a rectification of the Prussian frontiers nor the addition of Venetia to Italy as such. His reasoning was not followed by his subjects. Sympathy with Austria was early manifested, and the effect of Prussia's crushing victory was to make it very pronounced. The clerical party and those who remembered the Rhine frontier were united in their opposition to Prussian growth. Napoleon felt that his country's sentiments were too strong to be disregarded. When, therefore, Francis Joseph asked his mediation, promising in return a cession of Venetia to him, to be handed over to Italy, he stepped in gladly and proposed an armistice. Prussia accepted and the negotiations which led to the Treaty of Prague next month were begun at the end of July. The Emperor's diplomacy signally failed to gain anything for



his country out of the rearrangement of Europe. Prussia got nearly all she wished, Italy obtained Venetia, Austria dropped out of the German system, and yet Napoleon was unable to justify the remarks in his declaration of neutrality.

While her husband was vainly endeavouring to match his failing powers<sup>1</sup> against Bismarck's genius, the Empress Eugénie was winning for herself the admiration of all France. No action of hers met with such universal commendation as her conduct during the cholera epidemic in the summer of 1866. The scare was at its height at Amiens when she arrived there. She immediately "went under fire," as she expressed it, going to see the victims in hospital and showing herself without the slightest fear of death. Already she had shown an example by her visits to the hospitals when cases of cholera were occurring in Paris in the previous autumn. But it was at Amiens that she created the great sensation. She went from building to building, speaking to every patient and not shrinking from actual contact. An incident which particularly touched the people's hearts was when, two children being pointed out to her as orphaned by the scourge, she adopted them and gave orders that they

<sup>1</sup> In September, after the Peace of Prague was concluded, Napoleon was reported to be very ill when taking the waters at Vichy, and on his return to Paris he appeared so bad that there was general alarm and a fall on the Bourse. The European Press represented him as already dying.

302 The Last Empress of the French should be cared for at once. Nor did it escape attention that while she exposed herself unsparingly to the risk of cholera she refused to allow any of her ladies to accompany her. When she left the afflicted city it was amid the blessings of all its people, and the fame of the "Sister of Charity" followed her far. A few months later when she appeared at Nancy to represent the Emperor at the celebration of the centenary of Lorraine's incorporation with France, tales of Amiens were on everyone's lips. Her slanderers for the moment were dumb.

THE GREAT EXHIBI-  
TION YEAR



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GREAT EXHIBITION YEAR

THE Mexican War was generally considered by his contemporaries the greatest blot on the record of Napoleon III., and the utmost that his apologists could do was to maintain that he had been sadly misled and to distribute the censure as widely as possible round the Imperial circle, not forgetting the Empress. Of the grave effect of the war on Napoleon's fame there could be no doubt. Someone is said to have remarked to Garibaldi in 1864 that the Third Napoleon was a more successful man than the First. Garibaldi's answer was prudent, if not original: "We must wait for the end." Three years later the news of the Queretaro catastrophe may well have suggested to Garibaldi that the end of which he had spoken was not far off.

The responsibility for the ruinous enterprise has been variously apportioned. It is impossible to absolve the Emperor from the largest share in the blame. He seems to have been influenced by a number of motives. By the establishment of Maximilian of Austria on the Mexican throne he hoped at once to restore order in a land of re-

306 The Last Empress of the French  
volutions, as disdainful of the rights of foreigners  
and of its debts to France and other European  
nations as is the modern Venezuela; to check  
the pretensions of the United States by building  
up a strong Latin State in Central America;  
and to conciliate both Austria and Rome, to  
whom he had given so many causes of offence.  
Then he found his designs warmly supported  
by both Morny and the Empress. Eugénie's  
enemies credited her with a very large share in  
bringing about the war. There is, perhaps, more  
justice in connecting her name with this war  
than with any of the others of Napoleon's reign,  
in all of which her malign influence has been  
seen; especially if we accept the statement,  
quoted above, of Thiers to Prince Hohenlohe  
about Eugénie's conviction that a victorious  
war was needed to secure her son's future.  
But even in the case of Mexico little more  
can be definitely shown than that she sym-  
pathised with the idea of replacing an anti-  
clerical republic by a clerical absolute monarchy.  
The undertaking wore almost the aspect of a  
crusade to her, a crusade on behalf of divine and  
royal rights.<sup>1</sup> Her visit to Madrid in 1862 has

<sup>1</sup> Sir M. E. Grant Duff says that Madame Cornu, in con-  
versation with him, attributed the Mexican War to three  
things—the Empress's romantic fancy; Napoleon's desire  
for a counterpoise in America to the United States; and  
the representations of the Mexican exiles. The Countess  
Stéphanie de Tascher, it may be noted, looks on the Mexican

been connected with Mexican affairs. This is a mere guess. Her friendship with the Metternichs may well have inclined her to a scheme which promised a consolation to the Hapsburgs for their losses in Italy. She had therefore sufficient reasons for supporting the war. That is evidently not the same as saying that she was its promoter. Yet there have been writers who appear to think that they have shown her to be responsible for the enterprise when they have pointed out her sympathy with some of its objects.

The real villains of the piece (the Emperor being at least honest in his intentions in going to Mexico) are Morny, though he died before the end; and, in a less degree, Jecker the banker, afterwards shot by the Commune. Jecker was a Swiss by birth. Having lent some millions of francs to Miramon, the Mexican President, he attempted to recover the money from Juarez, Miramon's Liberal successor. As Juarez declined to pay, Jecker, who had become a French citizen, appealed to his new Government and in particular to Morny, who took up his cause heartily for a consideration of thirty per cent. on the "Jecker bonds." The Emperor knew nothing of this corrupt transaction and took Morny's advice regarding Mexico as sincere.

War as "a quixotic affair"; so that the Empress was not the only romantic person.

308 The Last Empress of the French  
Juarez had offended not only French, but also English and Spanish subjects, and a joint expedition was agreed upon. This was quite successful without striking a blow and in January 1862 the Convention of La Soledad was signed at Vera Cruz. England and Spain were both satisfied with Juarez's promises, and had France also withdrawn contented at the same time all would have ended well. At this point, however, the presence of further designs was revealed. An agent of the Absolutist party in Mexico appeared in the French camp at Vera Cruz, and a repudiation of the convention followed. It was announced that the crown of Mexico was to be given to the Archduke Maximilian of Austria. The English and Spanish forces were withdrawn in protest against France's violation of the agreement signed by the three Governments in London the previous October; and France was embarked now on a war against the Mexican Republic single-handed.

The first suggestion of the Archduke Maximilian's candidature seems to have been made in 1861, when agents of the defeated Clericalist president Miramon arrived in Europe to discover whether Austria would look on such a project favourably. The Archduke, being brother of the Emperor, was second heir to the throne, but the idea of Mexico lured him or rather, it was said, his wife. Maximilian was a weak amiable



man, whom a heroic death has made a saint. His weakness seems reflected in his features. Queen Victoria wrote of him: "With the exception of the mouth and chin he is good-looking." He had the Austrian lip, a receding chin, rather prominent blue eyes, and a long face framed in abundant fair hair. His portraits scarcely bear out the contemporary verdict on his handsomeness. He was, however, undoubtedly of a sweet disposition, and alone of the Austrians was regarded with affection in Italy. His country seat Miramar, on the Adriatic coast, provided him with his favourite hobby. He drew up all the designs for it himself and was said to have got into debt through his heavy expenditure on the house and grounds; yet he left it unfinished when he started on his fatal voyage.

The limitations of Miramar were too narrow for his young wife Charlotte, child of King Leopold of Belgium and his second wife Louise, daughter of Louis Philippe. Marrying Maximilian in 1859, when she was only nineteen, she was eager to see him on a throne, and her ambition decided him, perhaps already inclined to go. In October 1863 a Mexican deputation reached Miramar to make the formal offer of the throne. Maximilian accepted and started with Charlotte to Paris to interview the Emperor Napoleon. The Parisians, quick to express their verdict, nicknamed him the "Archdupe," considering him to be led by

### 310 The Last Empress of the French

his wife. The interview at the Tuileries was successful, the candidates were approved by both Emperor and Empress, and Maximilian obtained the promise of a French army's aid for three years. On the 10th April 1864, at Miramar, the Archduke renounced his claims to the Austrian succession and was then crowned Emperor of Mexico. The head of the Mexican deputation, Don Gutierrez de Estrada, addressing him said: "We are assured that you have the secret of conquering all men's hearts, and excel in the rare knowledge of the art of government." The assurance was a vain one. Maximilian did not know how to conquer or govern an unwilling country, and he was deceived if he thought that he was more than the nominee of the Clerical party in Mexico.

The new Emperor and Empress, however, took farewell of Napoleon and Eugénie with high hopes. On the fifth anniversary of their wedding-day they were off the coast of their Empire. The French forces, which numbered about forty thousand, quickly drove Juarez to the extreme North. Success was rapid but illusory. The end of the civil war in the United States upset French calculations. Full advantage had been taken of the preoccupation of the Washington Cabinet; but now in 1865 the States refused to acknowledge the Mexican Empire or anyone except President Juarez, and intimated

that the French troops must be withdrawn. Napoleon, to whom the failure of his attempts to mediate between the Federals and Confederates two years earlier had been a great disappointment,<sup>1</sup> saw no way of maintaining his position in Mexico if the United States were against him. He announced to Maximilian, therefore, that he would be obliged to bring back his troops to Europe. The Austrian, seeing plainly now how he had been deceived about the state of Mexico, where he found, as was said, that "the only thing well organised was robbery," protested against a breach of the understanding in Paris and despatched the Empress Charlotte to see Napoleon. The interview has become historic, in spite of the fact that its full details are unknown. Charlotte reached Saint-Cloud on the 24th August 1866, and once more stood in the presence of the Emperor and Empress who had congratulated her, less than three years earlier, on the throne whose misery had already begun to drive her mad. She was a tall fair woman, rather stiff and devoid of grace, but distinguished-looking and of considerable intelligence. Now, however, the sufferings which she had endured in Mexico and the anxiety of her journey made her a distracted suppliant before Napoleon. Hating as he did the infliction of

<sup>1</sup> Dr Evans's view of the Emperor Napoleon's "Northern sympathies" (Memoirs I. chap. iv.), is amiable but untenable.

312 The Last Empress of the French  
pain, the latter could nevertheless promise to do no more for her husband. At last Charlotte broke down completely. Asking for a drink, she was brought a glass of orange syrup, but she pushed it away, crying: "They want to poison me!" Then, after the interview had lasted nearly two hours, she hurried away, openly cursing the folly of one who, being the granddaughter of Louis Philippe, had trusted the word of a Bonaparte.

The sequel is well known. In a few weeks Charlotte was out of her senses and never recovered. The French troops were withdrawn from Mexico in the spring of 1867. The deserted Maximilian, knowing of his wife's madness, was anxious to leave Mexico, where the Juarists sprang up on every side as the French left; but he could not in honour desert those who were with him. On the 15th May he was betrayed together with his army of nine thousand men at Queretaro by Colonel Lopez, a Mexican to whom he had shown special favour. On the 15th June he was condemned to death by court-martial, together with Miramon and Mejia, his generals. Four days later, "in sunshine, on a summer's day," as he was reported to have wished he might die, he paid the penalty of others' mistakes.

The tragic horror that the Austrian Emperor's brother should die a traitor's death, with his

back against a wall, convulsed Europe, and no other end could have been so damaging to the reputation of the promoters of the Mexican scheme. France herself, not having shared the Emperor's political dreams, the Empress's vision of romance, or Morny's thirty per cent. on the Jecker bonds, and seeing only six thousand Frenchmen dead, was disgusted with the whole affair. The return of the troops from Mexico, in spite of Bazaine's military successes, was very coldly received in the spring, and the announcement of Maximilian's death on the very day of the grand prize-giving at the Exposition Universelle had a disastrous effect. Stories of Morny's interest in the war began to spread and, the offender himself being dead, did great harm to his master's reputation. As usual, Napoleon was all for hushing the matter up and, as usual, he brought unjust suspicion upon himself.

The abandonment of Mexico was not the only misfortune which befell Napoleon's plans in 1867. The Luxembourg negotiations ended in an international conference neutralising the duchy which Napoleon coveted, and the acquisition of which by France he thought Bismarck would regard benevolently. Thus he remained without the gain of territory with which he hoped to appease his subjects for the Prussian triumph in 1866; and there was nothing to set off against the bitterness of Mexico.

## 314 The Last Empress of the French

Still, it was the year of the Great Exhibition, and France might yet be dazzled. No effort was spared to attain this end, and Paris in 1867 looked no capital of a failing Empire. From the 1st April, when the gates on the Champ de Mars were opened, to the day of prize-giving there was a continuous round of splendour. The list of visitors included the Tsar of Russia, the Sultan of Turkey, seven Kings, three Queens, the Prince of Wales, Crown Prince of Prussia, and Tsarevitch, two dozen other princes, one of them from Japan, and nine Grand-dukes.<sup>1</sup> Paris was fairly intoxicated by the brilliant stream of royalty passing through her in May and early June. Not even the First Napoleon had ever collected a finer assembly. As the hostess of all the Empress Eugénie was now called upon to act. In the previous Exhibition year, 1855, she had been unable, on account of her health, to play a prominent part. This year she had the opportunity to display the grace and tact for which she was so noted in the reception of guests at her Court. She did not fail. Every royal visitor was compelled to admit her perfect success, and she had indeed ample revenge, in a most pleasant form, for the slights which the sovereigns of Europe had once been inclined to put upon Mademoiselle de Montijo.

<sup>1</sup> "The season," wrote Mérimée, "is prolific in princes and archdukes."

The greatest ceremony of the season took place not in the Exhibition but in the Bois de Boulogne, on the 6th June. This was the review of sixty thousand French troops, in honour of the Tsar and the King of Prussia. Three stands were erected on the race-course for the reception of the principal spectators. In the central stand sat the Empress Eugénie, with the Prince Imperial at her side, the Crown Princess of Prussia, her sister Princess Alice of Hesse, and the Grand Duchess of Leuchtenberg. In the group on horseback before this stand were Napoleon, the Tsar Alexander, King William, the Tsarevitch and the Grand-Duke Vladimir, the Crown Prince of Prussia, and the two Ministers Gortshakoff and Bismarck. The scene was one to make the sovereigns forget international troubles as a whole army defiled past them that afternoon. The day was not, however, to close without an outrage which, had it been successful, would have changed all the harmony and splendour to gloom. None of the sovereigns visiting Paris had made more impression than the Tsar Alexander II. His tall commanding figure attracted the eyes of the crowd everywhere. Not all the attention paid to him had been quite welcome. As he was being shown the Palais de Justice, a voice had been heard crying, "*Vive la Pologne, Monsieur!*" Now, on the day of the review, Alexander was

316 The Last Empress of the French reminded more seriously of the fact that he was Tsar of Russia. He was driving away from the Bois with Napoleon, Eugénie and the King of Prussia following in another carriage, when a man ran forward and fired a shot at him. Immediately a French officer dashed forward between the weapon and the carriage, and many hands were laid on the would-be assassin. Napoleon promptly stood up and shouted that no one was hurt. Then, turning with a smile to the Tsar, he embraced him and said: "Now we have been under fire together!" There was no panic, and the crowd cheered enthusiastically both Tsar and Emperor as they drove on. The prisoner turned out to be a Pole named Berzowski. He was condemned to penal servitude in New Caledonia, and was released forty years later, after he had gone mad.

On the night of the same day there was a ball at the Russian Embassy. It is recorded that as Alexander entered the ballroom with the Empress Eugénie on his arm, his face still showed traces of irritation. The Empress's eyes were moist with tears, and as the assembled guests loudly demonstrated their feelings she could not help betraying her emotion. She entertained a high regard for the Tsar, and, as will be seen, it was to him that she appealed in the hope of mitigating the Prussian terms in the autumn of 1870, when the other chief guest



on this memorable 6th June held in captivity her unhappy husband. Nothing could have seemed to her more improbable on this day of the grand review than that little more than three years later she would be appealing to Alexander from King William, whose kindly solicitude for the delicate Prince Imperial was so grateful to her now.

The military display in the Bois by no means ended the international festivities. Balls at the Tuileries, the Hôtel de Ville, and the various Embassies followed, and after the Tsar and King William had left there was still the Sultan to be entertained. He arrived in Paris in time for the prize-giving at the Exhibition, for which there were also present the Prince of Wales and the Crown Prince of Prussia, both on their second visits, and the Crown Prince of Italy. It was to have been a very brilliant ceremony on the 1st July, but just before the hour appointed there came by way of New York the ghastly news from Queretaro. The ceremony was held, the brilliancy was undimmed outwardly, but the feelings of all present, and especially, we must believe, of the French sovereigns, were very different from what they had anticipated. Nevertheless the Emperor firmly asserted what was the meaning of the Exposition Universelle in the mind of himself, its chief designer. "The Exhibition will mark, I hope, a new era of harmony and

XXX

318 The Last Empress of the French progress," he said. "Convinced as I am that Providence blesses the efforts of all those who desire to do well, as we do, I believe in the triumph of morality and justice, which are alone able to consolidate thrones, uplift peoples, and ennoble humanity."

It was a bad omen for "the new era of harmony" that 1867 did not close without forcing the Emperor to take military action in Italy. It must have cost him a severe struggle to interfere as he now did in the Peninsula, in spite of the opportunity which he thereby received of propitiating the very powerful party at home which included his wife in its ranks. Napoleon, in accordance with the agreement which he had made with Victor Emmanuel in September 1864, had withdrawn the French garrison from Papal territory by the end of 1866, amid bitter protests from the Empress and the clerical Imperialists. Victor Emmanuel, on his side, was to refrain from an attack on the Pope's dominions and to protect them from outside interference. In the autumn of 1867, however, Garibaldi acting once more as a free-lance, invaded what remained to the Pope of his former States and threatened Rome. The Church party in France immediately demanded that this breach of faith by Italy should be punished. The Empress, eagerly devoting herself to repair the previous outrages against the Church by French hands,

threw herself into the struggle with her whole heart. Unluckily for Napoleon, who had no wish whatever to protect the Pope's temporal authority, Garibaldi achieved little, and an attempted insurrection in Rome itself was a total failure. He might have recognised an accomplished fact and ventured once again to defy the Church and his wife. But the fiasco left him at the mercy of the Clericals. Yielding to the clamour of the latter, which had steadily grown in strength since 1859, he despatched General Failly and an army corps from Toulon to the aid of the Pope. On the 3rd November the French and Papal troops routed Garibaldi at Mentana, and once more a French garrison occupied Civita Vecchia.

That Napoleon had taken the expedient course was clearly shown by the debates in the French Chamber on the Roman question. Rouher, replying to the Opposition on behalf of the Emperor,\* said: "Italy aspires to Rome, which she considers absolutely necessary to her unity: but we declare, in the name of the French Government, that Italy shall *never* possess herself of Rome." Immediately the Right rose to their feet in a solid body and shouted "Never, never!"

As in the space of three years Napoleon's anticipations of an era of harmony were destined to be proved entirely false, so also was this boast

320 The Last Empress of the French of the Chamber concerning Rome. Within three years Italy was in possession of Rome, France not being in a position to prevent the occupation. Napoleon could, with apparent safety, disavow Garibaldi now. But the general violence of the French attitude at the moment was fatal to Franco-Italian friendship, and so in his hour of need the Emperor could not count upon Italy's gratitude for the great share which he had taken in freeing her.

On the other hand, he had at last reconciled to some extent the religious section of France. The Empress and the Roman Catholic masses were in triumph over his appearance once more as defender of the Church. Such loyalty as the Clerical party now again professed was very welcome to Napoleon. But unfortunately he could see no way to strengthen the Imperial hold on the throne, in the interest of his son, save by attracting the Liberals to his side. The two parties were impossible to amalgamate. In his ever-growing physical weakness, therefore, and robbed by death, in succession, of Mocquard, Morny, Fould, and Walewski, Napoleon could hardly avoid being pulled this way and that in the strife between the reactionaries, championed by the Empress, and the progressives, to whom his own inclinations went out more and more and who included in their ranks Prince Napoleon, still a power in spite of his terrible blunders.

## The Great Exhibition Year 321

Victory appeared to go to the progressives when the "Liberal Empire" was inaugurated in December 1869, but in nine months more Emperor, Empress and all alike who struggled for favour and power were swept away.



THE EVE OF DISASTER





## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE EVE OF DISASTER

IT was inevitable that the divergence between the political views of Napoleon and his wife should grow more marked in the last years of his reign. Eugénie's approval of the outside action of France which resulted in Mentana could weigh little against her dislike of the general tendency of home policy. Even apart from her theories about monarchical government, she could hardly be expected to welcome measures which must be interpreted as restrictive of her powers as Regent in the event of the Emperor's death during Prince Louis's minority. The concessions by which Napoleon tried in 1867-69, to meet half way the growing strength of the Opposition were bound to be offensive to her, and it was no secret at the time that she was opposing them obstinately. The Emperor pressed on nevertheless toward that liberalising of the Empire which he conceived to be necessary for the continuance of his dynasty upon the throne. In the spring of 1869 he decided to put in office an avowedly Liberal Ministry, throwing over the remnants of his old advisers, including Rouher, who on many

326 The Last Empress of the French points shared the Empress's opinions. It is always said that the General Election of April 1869 forced Napoleon's hand. The Opposition gained a million and a half in votes, a sign which could not be disregarded. Three months later the Emperor was promising fresh reforms which in September he had embodied in a Senatorial Decree. He had already opened negotiations with Emile Ollivier, one of the original "Five" who were the sole Opposition in the Chamber at the beginning of the reign. Ollivier had been in his early days so bitter an enemy of Bonapartism that, according to his own account, it was with tears in his eyes that he watched the return from Saint Helena of "the bones of a wretch that ought to have been cast out on the highway." Gradually, however, he had grown less hostile to the Empire, and, while he still continued to sit in Opposition, he had parted company with Jules Favre and many of his former associates. He gave a favourable answer to Napoleon's approaches and before the end of 1869 had consented to form a Ministry.

The Empress Eugénie had already made Ollivier's acquaintance. During her second Regency she had taken some steps in the direction of improving the treatment of youthful offenders, a matter in which she was always interested. Ollivier, having like views to hers on the subject, had been invited to the Tuileries and induced

to serve on a committee to consider a measure of juvenile prison reform. There is a story told of one of these committee meetings in Eugénie's study at the Tuileries. It was a stormy day and the wind suddenly blew one of the casements open, letting in the rain. The Empress hastened to close it, but was unable to do so until Ollivier had come to her assistance. He remarked to her when the window was shut: "Let us hope, Madame, that by our united efforts we may arrest the flood of human suffering as we have just now mastered the elements." Relations appear to have been always courteous, but there was little common ground between the Empress and the Liberal statesman. The abandonment of Rouher, in favour of Ollivier, making certain the impossibility of reconciliation between the Emperor and the Clerical party, did violence to Eugénie's strongest feelings, and it is significant that Napoleon completed his preparations for the change of government only after he had despatched his wife on an expedition which might be expected to distract her attention for a while from home affairs.

The journey of the Empress Eugénie to Constantinople and to Suez for the opening ceremony of the new Canal has been called the last triumph of her reign. The Canal scheme had not been popular in France, the kinship between the Empress and the constructor was

## 328 The Last Empress of the French

made a ground for attack on both, the Company's shares were depressed, and prophecies were abundant that the waterway would be un-navigable for large vessels. The very fact of the Empress's journey was a matter for bitter comment, and rumour exaggerated the expenses to an enormous sum. But the Emperor was determined that she should go to Suez. Not only did he desire to complete his arrangements with Ollivier, but also he was much too ill to travel himself. In August stories were current that his death was at hand. An operation was possible, and as Napoleon wished this to be kept a secret from Eugénie advantage was to be taken of her absence from Paris to perform it. Herein at least the Emperor showed a kind anxiety to spare his wife pain, in whatever light we may regard his plan for her absence during his political coup. Certainly he must have felt a conspirator's relief as he witnessed in October her departure on her brilliant tour.<sup>1</sup>

The Imperial yacht *L'Aigle* sailed first to Venice and then to Athens, both cities giving a hearty welcome to the Empress of the French. At Constantinople the Sultan, in his determination to outdo his Western rivals, greeted his

<sup>1</sup> Count Beust maintained that the journey to the East was planned to keep the Empress out of sight of the French people for a time, "as her Ultramontane leanings had made her very unpopular." See Prince Hohenlohe's report to the King of Bavaria (Memoirs I. 367).

visitor in extraordinary fashion. As the *Aigle* entered the Bosphorus naval and military salutes rang out on every side. Both shores were covered with thousands of spectators and the water with a fleet of boats, Eastern and Western in build. The Sultan himself came on board to greet his guest and to place at her disposal a forty-oared caique, containing a tent of crimson silk and costing with all its decorations 200,000 francs. She was lodged on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus and a magnificent litter waited to carry her to the palace. Twenty thousand Turkish troops were mustered to do her honour, and on her visit to Constantinople itself she found whole streets cleansed, repaired, and widened for her passage. A *fête* at the Palace was the conclusion of this unique hospitality accorded by a Mahomedan ruler to an European woman. On this occasion the Empress appeared in amber satin, decorated with diamonds, and caused a great sensation, it is recorded.

Ismail's reception of the Empress at Alexandria was almost as brilliant. A special train conveyed her to Cairo along a decorated and illuminated line. The actual passage of the Canal took place on the morning of the 16th November, *L'Aigle* being the first vessel to go through, carrying not only the Empress Eugénie, her two nieces and her suite, but also the Emperor of Austria, the Crown Prince of Prussia

330 The Last Empress of the French and the Dutch Prince and Princess, who had all come to witness the ceremony and now sat in a group around their hostess on the yacht, as to the music of the Napoleonic "Partant pour la Syrie" the Canal was successfully navigated. In the afternoon there followed a curious religious service, at which the Empress of the French, cousin of the victorious Ferdinand de Lesseps, was again the most prominent figure. Leaning on the arm of the Emperor Francis Joseph, and clad in pale grey silk, decorated with Brussels lace, wearing a black hat and veil and a black velvet ribbon round her neck, Eugénie listened in turn to the prayers of the Grand Ulema on behalf of the Mahomedans and of her own chaplain for the Christians present. The latter was the Abbé Bauer, who three years previously had arrived in France from Rome and had immediately fascinated not only the Court ladies, but their mistress also, by his eloquence and by an ascetic appearance which misrepresented his character. A short contact with the Court of the Tuileries sufficed to drive him to an imitation of the abbés of the old régime. But he did not thereby lose his influence, as was seen by his presence on this important occasion.

After this journey, certainly the most gorgeous event of her career, the Empress Eugénie returned to Paris in December to resume the

normal course of life which was to last so little longer. Napoleon had almost completed arrangements with Ollivier. By the end of the month the ministry was decided on, Ollivier being accompanied by three only of the Emperor's past advisers and by eight politicians drawn from the Centre of the Chamber. The Empress could only acquiesce in what had been planned and struggle on behalf of the defeated party. Unhappily the first great opportunity which fell to her of intervening again with effect in public affairs was that which her intervention helped to make also the last.

The Ollivier Ministry, actually so short-lived, must have felt justified in beginning its career with good hopes. With a strong Liberal-Imperialist backing in the Chamber, intent on peace abroad and moderate reform at home, with the Republican Opposition reduced to forty deputies, and with a number of well-known exiles back in Paris and reconciled to the Empire, the prospect seemed fair when Ollivier's term of office began. It was regarded, however, as a bad omen that the appointed day the 2nd January 1870 should coincide with that of the funeral of "Victor Noir," a not very reputable young journalist killed by the still less reputable Prince Pierre Bonaparte at the latter's house at Auteuil two days before. It was feared that the funeral would be made the occasion of

332 The Last Empress of the French  
an anti-dynastic demonstration. But in spite of the gathering of a crowd of about a hundred thousand people the day passed off without any serious disturbance. The crime of Prince Pierre, nevertheless, even if it was really committed in self-defence, as he alleged, was both damaging to his family and hurtful to the Government of his country. His trial and acquittal, though accompanied by an order to pay 25,000 francs compensation to the parents of his victim, did not improve matters. The whole incident afforded an opportunity for Henri Rochefort, who had taken advantage of the modification of the Press law in 1867 to found his notorious papers, *La Lanterne* and *La Marseillaise*, to attack with the utmost virulence every member of the Imperial family, not excluding the Empress Eugénie. Comparisons with Nero and the Borgias were among the usual weapons of the *Lanterne's* editor and the Government was compelled to take notice of him to such effect that he was prosecuted for incitement to rebellion, fined 3000 francs and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, from which the Paris mob in the following September rescued him to put him in the Government of the day.

Even without the troubles caused by the killing of Noir the Ministry soon began to find its task more difficult than had been expected.



Not only were the advanced section of its supporters pressing for speedy reforms, but the old Imperialists—strong in the support of the Empress and of Rouher, the Emperor's constant Minister, who was very naturally discontented with his dismissal from office,—were out of hand and virtually in Opposition. It was possible to ignore the old Imperialists temporally at least, since their loyalty was unshakable ; but only at the expense of more rapid forward movement to pacify the Liberal supporters of the throne. Ollivier proposed to the Senate, compliant as it befitted the Emperor's nominees to be, a revision of the Constitution, and the Senate's power of constitutional alteration was transferred to the nation, acting through a plebiscite. Applying the new rule at once, Napoleon asked for the nation's "approval of the Liberal reforms and ratification of the Senatorial Decree of the 20th April 1870. Thus came about the plebiscite of the 8th May, on the result of which the Government staked everything. Signs of hostile feeling were evident, especially in Paris, where red flags were hoisted, shouts of "Down with the Empire!" heard, and even a few barricades erected. Napoleon, taking with him the Empress, appeared in the streets without an escort, striving to prove a confidence which he scarcely felt. Nor was anxiety unjustified. In spite of tremendous exertions of the officials to secure

334 The Last Empress of the French every vote,<sup>1</sup> out of eight millions and a half, one and a half were seen declaring their discontent with the Government, and worst of all the discontent was found to have infected the Army. On the 19th May Lord Malmesbury was present at the Tuileries at a dinner to Gramont, his cousin, just appointed by the Emperor Minister of Foreign Affairs. Once more the English diplomatist had the opportunity of admiring the beautiful shoulders which had struck him seventeen years before, as he sat at the Empress's side. He found her again bitter in her complaints against the Press, in which Gramont joined her. The Emperor was much altered and looked old and very ill. He confided to Malmesbury in the smoking-room that no less than fifty thousand of the Army had voted "No" in the recent plebiscite. It cannot be wondered at that this question of the Army's loyalty should have been thought a serious matter or that it should have been taken into account, as it was said to have been, in the decision arrived at two months later.

Few facts about the Second Empire are more remarkable than the suddenness with which the final catastrophe came about. At the dinner to Gramont mentioned above, Napoleon spoke to Lord Malmesbury of the general tranquillity of Europe and evidently "had no idea of the

<sup>1</sup> Thiers declared to an English visitor that "this tampering with elections is for the last time."

coming hurricane." Certainly no one else in the Imperial circle had such an idea. The last winter in Paris under the Empire was as gay as its predecessors. For the Empress Eugénie her position seemed as secure as ever it had been. Tokens of the friendship of many European royal families had been given to her on her recent tour in the East. Her regency was assured in the event of her husband's sudden death, and her son was under her control to an extent which the Emperor's personal friends thought undesirable. She was still acknowledged in Paris as the Queen of Society—and of Fashion, for she had been able on her return from Egypt to make *caude-nil* the colour which all dressmakers expected their customers to wear. There was nothing in her surroundings to warn the Empress Eugénie of impending calamity, and she might well share the optimism of those about her with regard to things internal and external alike.

Quiet as was the appearance of Europe and unsuspecting of coming explosion as was Napoleon, the train was already laid; and, however ignorant France might be of a plot, that plot had already been maturing for years across the eastern frontier of France. The time has gone by when it sufficed to explain the Franco-Prussian War as the outcome of the notions of national honour entertained by the Empress Eugénie and her like-minded friends, of the

336 The Last Empress of the French  
criminal weakness of Napoleon III., or of a sudden delirium of the French people. Eugénie, Napoleon, and France did but take their part in selecting a time for an explosion which a more powerful intellectual force had determined should take place. The work of the actual match which lighted the train may be attributed to the same foolish Duke of Gramont whose name has just been mentioned. It is useless to look on the French side for a chief villain when on the other side the organiser of the plot took little pains to hide his part after he had attained his end.

No doubt the connection of the ostensible cause of the war with the land of the Empress's birth helped the accusations of her enemies in their accusations. Late in 1868 one of Spain's chronic revolutions drove Isabella in flight across the French frontier. The Imperial family were at Biarritz on their autumn visit and received Isabella on her way to Pau. Eugénie, who was noticed to show great respect to the fallen queen throughout their interview, was much affected at the railway station where they parted and insisted on getting into the carriage to receive a farewell embrace. The Emperor was cold, says the Countess Stéphanie, who was an eye-witness of the scene, while the Prince Imperial was curious and astonished. The attitude of Eugénie on this occasion, as at Madrid in 1862, shows how

little malice she bore toward "her sovereign," as she persisted in calling Isabella, for the disgrace put upon her in her girlhood.

Nothing could have been further from the thoughts of all concerned than the idea that Isabella's loss of her throne would involve the ruin of the Napoleonic dynasty in France. Yet such was the result in less than two years' time. Isabella had desired to abdicate in favour of her son, the Prince of the Asturias, afterwards Alfonso XII. Spain refused to recognise the Prince and looked for a ruler elsewhere. General Prim, temporarily governing the country, offered the crown first to a Portuguese and then to an Italian Prince. After both had declined the honour he approached Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, whose father Prince Anthony had preceded Bismarck as Prussian Premier. Prince Leopold, a good-looking young man who had married the beautiful daughter of the King of Portugal, was politically quite insignificant. Prim probably imagined that he would be welcome to Napoleon, his father being grand-nephew of Murat and his mother daughter of the Grand-Duke of Baden and Stéphanie Beauharnais. Napoleon, however, if we judge by the utterances of his responsible Ministers, could not ignore the fact that Leopold was a German. As for the Empress Eugénie she was far more indignant than her husband, for her Legitimist

338 The Last Empress of the French principles were outraged by the suggestion of a change of dynasty.

On the first hint of a Hohenzollern succession to the Spanish throne, Benedetti the French representative at Berlin was instructed to make enquiries and received the answer that the candidature had never been mentioned in Prussia. This was possibly true at the moment, but early in 1870 a definite offer was made. On the 3rd July it was announced in Paris that Prince Leopold would accept the offer if the Spanish Cortes ratified his election. So readily inflamed was French public opinion at the idea that the declaration of war seventeen days later was received with almost universal acclamation — a fact which put France, the unprepared, wrong in the eyes of the world as against Prussia, who had seen the war coming and had prepared for it in every way.

But the intention of Prussia or the Prussian Government, that is, ultimately, of Bismarck to drive France into war does not absolve those who allowed her to be so driven. The question remains whether the censure has been rightly apportioned. The idea that it was Napoleon's war was only entertained, even at the time, by blind enemies of the Emperor. That it was the Empress's war was a more general theory and one which has endured to the present day. With the Empress have been coupled the Duke

of Gramont, Marshal Leboeuf, and the reactionaries as a party; but it is the Empress chiefly who has been held up to reproach and it is to her that has been attributed the boast about "her war." Such an expression is entirely inconsistent with her actions or reported speeches after the outbreak of the war, nor can it be traced to any known occasion, either before or after. Her traducers were naturally content with the statement that she used to speak so, without producing evidence which they did not possess.

To judge by the feeling aroused in Paris and throughout the Press as soon as Prim's offer to Prince Leopold became definitely known, almost the whole nation was eager to claim part in a campaign to keep a Hohenzollern off the throne of Spain. A chance was given to the reactionaries, who pressed at once to the front of public opinion in the matter. But other parties were not far behind. Within the Ministry itself, Gramont, the fatal element introduced by the Emperor into Ollivier's Cabinet, was foremost in denouncing the menace and the insult to France. Duke Agenor de Gramont was one of the very few of the old nobility whom Napoleon III. succeeded in attracting to his side. Being rich and therefore above suspicion of becoming a Bonapartist for gain, he was said to have been led by ambition to join Napoleon, consider-

340 The Last Empress of the French  
ing that his diplomatic talents ought not to be  
wasted. Representing France in succession at  
Turin, Rome, and Vienna, he was recalled by  
his master from the last-named post to strengthen  
the Ollivier Ministry by becoming its Foreign  
Minister, though he was in no way a Liberal.  
Malmesbury, his cousin, pronounces him agree-  
able and polished in society, but vain and im-  
petuous. Certainly he gave no signs of the  
diplomatic genius with which he credited himself.  
Unhappily the Emperor apparently took him at  
his own valuation and gave him a freer hand  
than his predecessors had at the Foreign Office  
and the result was almost immediately fatal.  
Some suspicion of the danger may have been  
felt outside Government circles.<sup>1</sup> But Ollivier,  
though a man of peace, did not protest against  
association in office with the Duke, and the  
latter found in one of his colleagues, Leboeuf  
the War Minister, a kindred spirit.

On the definite news of Prince Leopold's

<sup>1</sup> Dr Evans records that when Gramont's appointment was announced, a statesman of European reputation said to him : " Believe me, the appointment forebodes a Franco-Prussian war." In the Hohenlohe Memoirs it is stated that " when Gramont was appointed Minister, Bismarck told Benedetti that this was an indication that the Emperor had some dark design, otherwise he would never have made so stupid a man Minister. Benedetti maintained that the Emperor did not know Gramont well enough, at which Bismarck remarked that the Emperor Napoleon had described Gramont to him as *un ancien bellâtre*" (II. 65).



reply to the Spanish offer, Napoleon summoned to his presence Gramont, who the same evening assured Count Metternich that the Hohenzollern succession could never be, since France would oppose it by every means, even if a war with Prussia were the result. He proceeded to talk in the Legislative Body of "the threatened revival of the empire of Charles V.," assuring them that the French Government would do its duty without hesitation or weakness. Ollivier and his fellow Liberals were carried along in the wake of Gramont and Leboeuf. The latter wished to look on the mere fact of Prince Leopold being a candidate as a ground for war. The Emperor, however, was still a restraining force. After the moderately favourable interview between Benedetti and King William at Ems on the 9th July the mischievous activity of Gramont, who was daily urging Benedetti to press Prussia hard, was temporarily checked. Military preparations paused. On the 12th news was received of the telegram to Madrid of *père Antoine*, as the Parisians called him, withdrawing his son Leopold's candidature. Ollivier rushed in to the Emperor's presence, waving a telegram in the air and crying "Peace! Peace!" He was despatched to the Legislative Body, where he congratulated the peace party on the turn taken by events. Napoleon himself lost no time in sending for Nigra, whom he requested to inform the Italian

342 The Last Empress of the French Government that Prince Antony's telegram meant peace. He knew that public opinion in France would prefer war, he added, but the renunciation of Prince Leopold's claim disposed of all the pretexts for it.

Indeed, but for Gramont and Bismarck some other pretext must have been sought for war than was furnished by the affair of the Spanish succession. Gramont endeavoured through the Prussian Ambassador in Paris to obtain what was virtually an apology from King William. The King on receipt of Baron Werther's despatch sent an aide-de-camp to Benedetti, announcing that Prince Leopold had confirmed his withdrawal and stating that the matter was ended. Benedetti, acting as the tool of Gramont, sought the King, whom he met as he took his morning "waters," and pressed him for an audience, as his instructions required a guarantee against a renewal of the Hohenzollern candidate. The King replied that another audience would be quite useless, as he had nothing to add to what he had already said. With that he turned away. Both left Ems the next morning, no rupture having occurred.

The next stroke was Bismarck's. Displaying "the red rag for the French bull," as he called it, he had published in Berlin on the 13th a brief telegram from Ems to the effect that the King had refused to see the French Ambassador and

had told him he had no more to say on the subject. Copies of the telegram were sent to all the Prussian embassies. On the 14th the news was known in Paris, with the additional touch that King William had turned his back on Benedetti, seeking an interview from him, on the promenade at Ems. The bull did not refuse to notice the rag. Public opinion of all shades was already so stirred that the effect of the alleged insult was inevitable. Three Ministerial Councils were held during the day and at the third, a little before midnight, France's decision was made.

It was at this Council at Saint-Cloud on the 14th July that the Empress Eugénie took the step which saddled her with responsibility for the war. Her intervention was thus described to Lord Malmesbury by Gramont, anxious after the event to clear himself of blame. "The Empress, a high-spirited and impressionable woman, made a strong and most excited address, declaring that war was inevitable if the honour of France was to be sustained." Marshal Leboeuf, he added, followed her and violently threw down his portfolio, declaring that if there was no war he resigned his office and his military rank. The Emperor (who seems to have been only a listener at this third Council) yielded, and Gramont went off to Paris to announce the result of the deliberations.

Thus the evidence which makes Eugénie the stirrer of the Franco-Prussian War would certainly not be considered enough to convict anyone else. It is proved, it may be granted, that she thought that honour demanded war. On her interpretation of honour, which was also all France's at the moment, was she wrong? The Bismarck version of the Ems affair on the 13th July was deliberately intended to insult a high-spirited nation, the most military nation of the day, and it succeeded as it could but succeed.<sup>1</sup> That she and all others who, seeing war unavoidable, demanded its advent were to blame in that they did not insist on making it at France's convenience, not at Prussia's, is a just charge. But who is deserving of censure, the Empress who has to rely on the information of her country's Foreign and War Ministers, or the Foreign Minister who spends his strength in hastening on the rupture, the War Minister who declares that all is ready to the last gaiter button? Napoleon might justly be blamed for accepting statements by Leboeuf to the effect that France never was and never would be so ready for war as in 1870, knowing that the plans which Marshal Niel, Leboeuf's predecessor at the War Office, had thought necessary for

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon was fully justified in quoting to the deputation from the Legislative Body on the 22nd July Montesquieu's saying that "the real author of a war is not he who declares it but he who makes it necessary."

France's military safety had not been carried into effect and that the advice of his own trusted military *attaché* Colonel Stoffel at Berlin had been ridiculed by Gramont and others. But was the Empress supposed to go behind the declarations of the Ministers paid to know and report on the country's fitness? Assured that France was fit and knowing that France shared her views as to the bearing of insults, she must in the circumstances be for war, unless her sentiments as woman, wife, and mother restrained her. Now her maternal attitude was often likened to that of the Spartans. Only a few days after the outbreak of war she said: "In case of a defeat I prefer my son to be with the Army. I do not wish him to be made a little Louis XVII." As the wife of a Bonaparte, she thought that her husband must stand out in France's eyes as a ruler who inflicted on her no humiliations. There is no evidence that she forgot what is supposed to be a woman's proper attitude toward war nor looked on it as a matter for a light heart. Madame Carette quotes her words to Vareigne, Palace Prefect at the Tuileries: "The honour of France is at stake, but what disaster will follow if fortune goes against us! We have but one card to play. If we are not successful, France will not only be dismembered but swallowed up by the most frightful revolution ever witnessed." These words, so soon to be

346 The Last Empress of the French proved true, were uttered by the Empress on the night of the declaration of war as she strolled in the park at Saint-Cloud with her ladies and the Baron. Varenne had rallied her on her extreme melancholy, whereon she asked how she could be expected to be free from care and proceeded to make her sad prophecy.

Decidedly those who have represented Eugénie as simply carried away by thirst for military glory, eager to prop the tottering dynasty, fanatically anxious for the overthrow of a great Protestant Power, and so on, defeat their own case by the recklessness of their accusations. More venomous accusations of a desire for Regency perhaps need not be more than noticed.

It is open to say that if the Empress Eugénie had been quite a different woman she would have thrown all her influence in the scale for peace on the night of the 14th July. Would she then have been successful? The Emperor, it is true, as Eugénie afterwards expressed it in a letter to Dr Evans "neither desired nor sought" the war, but "submitted to it."<sup>1</sup> But was Gramont to be talked over, who, in his own words, "decided on the war with an absolute confidence in victory"? Or Leboeuf, who wished to make the mere fact of the Hohenzollern pretensions a ground for hostilities? Or the people of Paris, who went mad with delight on the

<sup>1</sup> Evans I. 203 ff.

day following the fatal Council at Saint-Cloud? Or the Press, including the anti-governmental papers, who denounced the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidature without an apology to France as “a triumph worse than any humiliation”?





THE THIRD REGENCY  
AND THE FLIGHT



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE THIRD REGENCY AND THE FLIGHT

FEW matters in French history are more generally familiar than the state of Paris from the 15th July onward, when the cries of "*À Berlin! À bas la Prusse!*" were in everyone's mouth and the cafés and streets were full of people singing the "*Marseillaise*." Nor have many phrases attained more notoriety than Ollivier's "light heart," which apparently he only took up from the excited deputies in the Legislative Body. The preliminary moves of the Franco-Prussian War need not be described here. The direct effect on the Empress's position was seen a week after the actual declaration. On the 26th July a decree was issued constituting Eugénie Regent, with a Council to aid her, from the moment when the Emperor left for the front. On the following evening Monseigneur Darboy, Archbishop of Paris, celebrated Mass at Saint-Cloud for the Emperor, Empress, and Prince Imperial, and on the morning of the 28th the first and last-named left the neighbourhood of Paris for ever. It was thought unadvisable that Napoleon (on whose bodily condition his doctors had three weeks be-

352 The Last Empress of the French  
fore held a private consultation) should start from Paris itself, and a special train was run from a temporary station improvised at a summer-house in the park at Saint-Cloud. The Emperor came out of his wife's apartments into the grand saloon, in the undress uniform of a General of Division. The Prince Imperial followed in sub-lieutenant's dress, slapping his sword constantly against his side as though to show his pride in it. But with his other hand he held the Empress's, and close observers noticed tears in his eyes. The Emperor was said to have an expression of sadness on his face which had never been seen before. Eugénie, though trembling, strove hard to look cheerful and kept her emotion under control until the parting was over. After Napoleon had said good-bye to those in the saloon, he drove with his wife and son to the station. On the platform he shook hands with Ollivier, to whom his last words were: "I count upon you," and the signal for departure was given. "Do your duty, Louis!" was the Empress's final message to the Prince,<sup>1</sup> and then amid cries of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" the train steamed out for Metz. Eugénie returned to her carriage and drove back weeping to the Palace. Spartan motherhood was

<sup>1</sup> She had already telegraphed to his grandmother in Spain: "Louis will start with his father for the Army in a few days, and I wish you to send him your blessing. Do not be anxious. I am quite calm. He must do his duty and bring honour to his name."

### Third Regency and the Flight 353

not as easy a pose for her as her enemies imagined.

Saint-Cloud was the Regent's appointed place of residence during the opening days of the campaign. With her were her dead sister's two daughters and Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, Imperial aide-de-camp, who was entrusted with the care of her and occupied rooms with his family in the Palace. The closing days of July were quiet. A letter from the Emperor arrived, telling of unreadiness and confusion at Metz and a forced change of the plan of campaign. Then on the 2nd August a telegram followed, announcing the affair at Saarbrück. Napoleon's perfectly reasonable statement that "Louis bore himself well under fire" was soon afterwards mercilessly ridiculed by his enemies. It was a fact that the fourteen-year-old Prince was under Prussian fire and that he picked up a bullet as a memento. Had success fallen to France, that fact would have been recalled with delight. As it was, the announcement shared the fate of the accompanying report of the "victory" of Saarbrück. The French nation had been only too eager to receive news of success. Rouher, ex-Minister, President of the Senate, and now member of the Council of Regency, had already spoken to the Senators of "the grateful nation preparing the honours of victory." Saarbrück seemed to promise the victory. When the truth

354 The Last Empress of the French  
was discovered, indignation swept away all attempts at justice or discrimination.

Nor did the expectant masses have long to wait for disillusion. On Saturday the 6th August the air was full of rumours of a great battle. At first a French success, with the Crown Prince and twenty-five thousand Prussians prisoners, was talked of at Paris, and preparations began to be made for decorating the city. The Empress Eugénie received the earliest correct tidings. Admiral de la Gravière was preparing to dine with her at Saint-Cloud on Saturday night, when he was informed that bad news had reached her. Hastening to her, he found her speechlessly awaiting the decipherment of a telegram from the Emperor, while her nieces were sobbing at her side. She handed the Admiral the beginning of the transcript, "We are in full retreat. . . ." The conclusion was brought in from the next room, and she read the last words, "All may yet be retrieved." She fell on her knees and began to weep. The Admiral tried to calm her, when she turned to him and said "I thank God that there is still room for hope." It was decided that she must go to Paris that night, and the evil news was meanwhile sent to the Ministry of the Interior. Soon after a message was received from the Prefect of Police, urging the Empress to leave Saint-Cloud, as he feared an attack on it by the mob. Already the disaster was public

### Third Regency and the Flight 355

and Ollivier had been attacked in the streets. Eugénie started without further delay and soon after midnight was at the Tuileries to meet the Council of Regency. The early hours of Sunday were spent in discussing measures for the defence of Paris, etc., and daylight found Empress and her advisers still at work. Eugénie's first words to them had been that "it was not a question of saving the Empire, but of saving France." Least of all was she disposed to minimise the dangers threatened by defeat, nor at any time between now and the day of her flight from Paris did her language betray the selfish dynastic and personal motives attributed to her.

The behaviour of Paris after the official announcement of the news of Wörth and Forbach on Sunday morning justified the gloomiest fears. Paris, as so often, displayed France at her worst. The general alarm and the accusations of treason were coupled with violent outcries against the military commanders and the ruling dynasty. The mob would have required very little encouragement to wreck the Bourse, on the suspicion that the first rumours of success were inspired by speculators, or to sack the Palace, as the abode of the Empress. Sunday passed, however, without an outbreak and on the following day the Empress issued a proclamation from the Tuileries. "Frenchmen," she said, "the beginning of the war is unfavourable to us. We have

356 The Last Empress of the French met with a check. Be firm in face of this reverse, and let us hasten to repair it. Let there be but one party among us, the party of France; and let us follow but one flag, that of the national honour. You shall see me here in your midst, the first at the post of danger, defending the banner of France."

Her own brave words could not deceive her. There was no "one party," and sacrifices were necessary to appease the mob. Ollivier must go with the first. The unfortunate Premier had endeavoured, immediately after the news of Wörth, to save his Cabinet by attracting to the Ministry of War the popular Trochu, then in Paris without a command, in place of the incompetent and ruined Leboeuf. Trochu refused to save the falling Ministry. Nor could Ollivier, it was said, persuade the Empress to allow him to put under arrest the most dangerous leaders of the Opposition. In any case, his own doom was sealed. The meeting of the Legislative Body on the 9th August, remarkable for violence of language inside and outside the Chamber, proceeded at once to carry a vote of no confidence and the Ministry resigned. Ollivier retired to Switzerland. The Empress determined to entrust the Government to a man of her own choice. In command of the troops at Lyons there was Count Palikao, who as General de Montauban commanded the



### Third Regency and the Flight 357

French troops in North China in 1860 and shared with Lord Elgin the very doubtful glory of the loot of the Summer Palace at Peking. He was seventy-five years of age, but was still very active and carried his years well.<sup>1</sup> He appealed to the Empress as an embodiment of chivalry. She greeted him on his arrival at the Tuileries on the morning of the 10th August with the words: "General, I have sent for you because I have to ask from you a great act of devotion." He was ready, he replied, to prove his devotion to Empress and to country. "I ask you to accept the Ministry of War." Palikao, possibly prepared for the request, accepted. The Empress continued: "As you have consented, you must sacrifice yourself entirely. You must form a new Ministry." Again Palikao accepted the task, and for the moment the situation was saved.

The fall of the Ollivier Cabinet and the removal of Leboeuf was not all that the nation in defeat required. Napoleon recognised this by resigning his own chief command and putting it in the hands of Bazaine, a popular choice. Then, no longer a believer in his star and so ill that he could hardly sit a horse, he departed to Châlons. While his enemies were bitterly

<sup>1</sup> In 1860 Sir Hope Grant had described him as "a fine, handsome, soldier-like man, apparently under sixty years of age."

## 358 The Last Empress of the French

assailing the man who disguised his pallor by painting his face, Napoleon III. was probably showing the greatest courage of his life;<sup>1</sup> and he had never been accused of cowardice before. It was not of course known at the time, precautions having been taken to keep it even from the Empress, that at the beginning of July a consultation of five doctors had been held to consider whether an operation could be longer delayed. He was relieved for the moment but obviously was not fit to start on a campaign. His very looks and incapacity for military duties were so pronounced that the generals in despair urged him to depart from the front. He retired as far as Châlons, where he met General Trochu, appointed to command the 12th Corps there after his refusal to join Ollivier. Knowing Trochu's popularity with the people—not with the Army authorities, for he was long an advocate of Army reform—Napoleon besought him to go to Paris as Governor. Trochu consented only on the understanding that the Emperor was to follow him soon. "Your popularity," said Napoleon to him as he went, "is the key to open the door of the Tuileries for me. Consult with the Empress. I have every confidence in you."

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Thompson who operated on him in January 1872 spoke of his "extraordinary heroism" in sitting in the saddle for five hours at Sedan. (Evans II. p. 601.)

## Third Regency and the Flight 359

Trochu left Chalons on the 17th August and arrived in the capital distinctly stating that he was preceding the Emperor. The struggle which immediately followed between the Empress and the General is one of the saddest features of Eugénie's last weeks in Paris. Had there been the confidence between the two which the Emperor desired, at least the bitterness of the final scenes of the Second Empire would have been lessened. But from the first matters went wrong. The Empress, who now was living entirely within the walls of the Tuileries, the streets being no longer safe for her, and transacting there all the business of the Council, was startled by the appearance of Trochu at the Palace at 1.30 A.M. on the 18th August. He had just reached Paris and desired an immediate interview. According to the memoirs which he left behind him at his death, she received him with burning eyes and brilliant cheeks and greeted him with the words: "General, do you not think that at this supreme crisis we ought to recall the Orleans Princes?" Trochu thought she looked upon him as a traitor and considered the question a trap. It seems at least possible that the Empress meant simply what she said. The Orleans Princes had requested to be recalled after the establishment of the Liberal Empire, and Eugénie had always been Orleanist, if not in the same way as hostile accounts represented

360 The Last Empress of the French  
Trochu to be. However, in spite of some conciliatory words from Admiral de la Gravière, the first interview was but an unhappy foretaste of what was to come. The question of the Emperor's return to Paris above all caused a wide divergence of ideas. Already Ollivier, before his fall but after Wörth, had insisted that Napoleon must return. Eugénie had then steadfastly declined to hear of such a thing. Return would look like flight; the Emperor's place was with the Army. As soon as France obtained the slightest advantage, then let the Emperor come back to Paris; but not until then. She argued long with Trochu now and explained to him the political reasons against his desire. According to her friends, he appeared convinced at last. But there is no proof of this. The Empress followed up her arguments by telegraphing to Châlons: "Do not think of coming back unless you wish to let loose a terrible revolution. This is the advice of Rouher and Chevreau,<sup>1</sup> whom I saw this morning. People would say you were running away from danger. Do not forget how all Prince Napoleon's life has been affected by his departure from the Crimea."

So determined was Eugénie to gain her point that she sent Rouher to Napoleon to persuade him to stay where he was. The Emperor gave way before this persistence and broke his promise

<sup>1</sup> Minister of the Interior.

to Trochu. The latter, brought to Paris on false pretences and denied the Empress's confidence, avoided the Tuileries, where he at least imagined himself regarded with suspicion and contempt. According to Count Irisson d'Hérison (who is, however, a witness unfriendly to the Empress), Eugénie gave the General to understand that she was obliged to tolerate him, but that his presence at Court was disagreeable to her. Colour is certainly lent to this statement by the story told by Madame Carette, a very different witness from the Count. There had been a Council meeting at the Tuileries, after which the Empress detained Trochu for a few minutes' private conversation in her study. She came out to her ladies afterwards with a weary face, saying that Trochu had been more tedious than ever, and related how, when she expressed her confidence in him, he had knelt down and kissed her hand, exclaiming: "Madame, I am a Breton, a Catholic, and a soldier, and will serve you to the death!" "An honest man," said Eugénie to her friends, "has no need of such a flood of words to express his readiness to do his duty"; and she rubbed the back of her hand as if in repugnance at the recent kiss. Others were more pronounced in their attitude towards the General, and it can hardly be denied that he was improperly treated at the Palace. As the Emperor's nominee alone he had a right to

362 The Last Empress of the French confidence, unless he was proved disloyal. The means which he took to resent his treatment, an almost entire abandonment of the Empress in the hour of greatest need, unfortunately for him seemed to confirm the suggestion of disloyalty. Even Napoleon considered that he betrayed his trust. Malmesbury records that in the course of one of his conversations with the ex-Emperor at Chislehurst in the following May he mentioned the name of Trochu. Napoleon, who had said no word against anyone yet, suddenly abandoned his general calm to exclaim "*Ah, voilà un drôle!*"<sup>1</sup>

The Empress Eugénie's vigorous resistance to her husband's proposed return to Paris naturally did not escape comment. As was so often her fate, both friends and enemies of the Emperor attacked her. Nevertheless her judgment seems to have been politically sound. A Napoleon should not come back unless victorious. Not even the First Napoleon could afford to do that after Waterloo. What could Napoleon III., a broken-down wreck as well as a defeated commander, do in such circumstances? Not even humanity nor a wife's affection could commend that he should display his weakness to the treacherous Parisian populace in order to gain

<sup>1</sup> In a pamphlet published not long before his death Napoleon wrote of Trochu: "Never has a treason been committed so black, flagrant, and unpardonable—committed, too, against a woman and during a time of foreign invasion."

the shelter of the Tuileries for such time as he might be allowed to stay there. It is true that his generals desired his departure from the seat of war, that he had hopes that he might be of use in hastening up supports, and that he and Trochu considered it a compact that the general's return should be followed by that of his master. But Eugénie had seen how Paris received the news of disaster and could be under no illusions as to the welcome which their greatest victim would receive there. It should be considered a proof of her courage that she persisted in advice (almost a command) which was open to the most malicious construction and was contrary to all feelings of tenderness. It was certainly not conduct deserving the sneer about her "three grudges against the Emperor—that he had grown old, had turned a Liberal, and had been beaten."<sup>1</sup>

The state of Paris grew rapidly worse after Trochu's arrival, in spite of the regard which he inspired outside the Palace. The news of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte followed him rapidly. The city, officially in a state of siege since the 8th August, remained without an actual revolution; but it had all the appearances of revolution, including even occasional fighting in the streets. The common talk in the crowd and in the cafés was of deposing the dynasty. In the Legis-

<sup>1</sup> M. de la Gorce has not shrunk from this sneer, however.

364 The Last Empress of the French

lative Body the most insistent question was whether there was to be a general armament. On the Bourse there was a wild debauch of speculation. Rumours of French successes were constantly started, to be silenced very soon by fresh truths. The Empress in the midst of all spent her time almost entirely between the Council of Regency and hospital work. As she never left the Palace the Council was held there, and its meetings took place thrice daily. A great part of the Tuileries had been turned by Eugénie into a shelter for the wounded pouring back from the front. All the time which she could spare she spent in going from sick-bed to sick-bed. Her meals she took while at work in her private study. When she arrived from Saint-Cloud on the night of the 6th August she found all the rooms at the Tuileries shrouded in their usual summer coverings and these she forbade to be removed. There were no distractions allowed from the daily round of labour. The Empress's name-day, always before one of the gayest days in the year, passed hardly noticed. The devoted Madame Carette records that she took a stroll in the Tuileries garden that evening. Outside could be heard the noises of the crowd and of the rural fire-brigades which had just been summoned to Paris to aid in the defence of the city. The Palace buildings stood out clearly against a red sunset. "Look!" cried



### Third Regency and the Flight 365

the Empress, "you would think the Tuileries were in flames"—and she turned to go indoors with a rigid expression on her pinched and marble-pale face which struck most painfully one who had known her so long in other circumstances. That ambition to be the ruler, which was alleged to have inspired her to warn Napoleon off from Paris, procured for the Empress Eugénie what has truly been described as "the long torture" of August and early September 1870. So great was the strain that she could get no natural sleep, and she felt obliged to maintain herself with very strong coffee and chloral. There can be little wonder that, after the crushing blow of Sedan, the afternoon of the 4th September found her will broken at last in the officious hands of the Austrian and Italian Ambassadors.

With the arrival of September, the end came very soon. Paris, which stood the shock of the opening defeats and even the first losses under Bazaine, of whom better had been expected, was not in a state to bear up against the catastrophe of Sedan. The terrible news came in gradually, nor was the Empress the first to hear it. On the second afternoon of the month a Brussels despatch reached the Minister of Public Works, Baron Jerome David, one of the numerous Jeromes of whom the acknowledged father was the ex-King of Westphalia. The despatch announced briefly

366 The Last Empress of the French  
that there had been a great defeat, that the Emperor was prisoner, MacMahon killed, and the Prince Imperial lost. David immediately communicated the report to the Tuileries, where the Empress, hoping in the absence of official news that it might prove false, although she betrayed great agitation, maintained a brave front. Her friends the same evening, without consulting her, persuaded Mérimée to visit Thiers, one of the ten members of the Legislative Body who on the 15th July had opposed Ollivier's requisition for the war, and after informing him of what had happened to beg him to come to the aid of the Government. Thiers refused Mérimée's appeal he did a second also from distracted Imperialists. As he told Prince Hohenlohe in 1875, he reported to the Empress that he could not help her. "I had no special esteem for the Court," he added, "but I would have saved her if I had had the power. However, I had it not, and it would have been in vain to make the attempt."<sup>1</sup>

This was the last attempted service of the poor "Court fool" Mérimée to the mistress whose virtues and charm he extolled so much and so long. A week earlier he had written to his friend Panizzi in London: "I have seen the Empress. Her conduct is truly saintly and deserves all admiration." Two weeks later he

<sup>1</sup> Hohenlohe Memoirs, II. 135.

died at Cannes, completely broken down by the shock of the Empire's fall.

The official confirmation of Sedan which the Empress had awaited was not long in coming. On the following afternoon, Saturday the 3rd September, Chevreau hastened into her presence and handed her a telegram. She read it, fell back in a chair, and after a moment of agonised silence withdrew into an inner room. She had read :

The Army is defeated and captive. Having failed to meet death in the midst of my soldiers, I have been forced to surrender myself to save the Army. NAPOLEON.

Eugénie did not abandon her task. Recovering herself in her private room she summoned the Council to the Palace, where a four hours' discussion took place. The Empress made no plea on behalf of herself. She declared that there must be no blood shed in her defence and declined an extra guard for the Tuileries for fear that it might cause a collision between the troops and the populace. She desired to see Trochu, and Admiral de la Gravière was sent to him at once. The Governor of Paris returned the extraordinary answer that after an inspection of the forts he was tired and that he had not dined yet. A second message, sent through Chevreau, secured a promise to come after dinner. Trochu had his

## 368 The Last Empress of the French

revenge for all slights put on him at Court, for he did not visit until next day the woman who asked for his help. Probably he felt that he required sleep. But the Empress can have had little. Further despatches were constantly coming in with details of Sedan. The Legislative Body was sitting, but no information was sent to the Empress as to what they were doing—which was preparing for the motion deposing the dynasty next day. Part of the night was spent by her in destroying private papers. At seven in the morning—it was another Sunday morning, as after Wörth—she went to her private chapel. A visit to the wounded in the Palace followed, and at half-past eight the Council began to assemble. Soon after General Trochu arrived, greeting the Empress with the words “Madame, the hour of great danger is at hand. We will do all that we ought to do!” A short conversation with the Governor apart is said to have encouraged Eugénie but little. When the Council began, however, she showed herself resolute. She must fall without encumbering the defence, she said, and opposed a suggestion to move the Government from the dangerous neighbourhood of Paris. It was agreed to appeal by proclamation to the patriotic feelings of the city and to invite the Legislative Body to elect five representatives to assist the Regency. The answer to the invitation was brought to the Tuileries

by a deputation, who requested the Empress to hand over her powers to the Legislative Body. "I cannot consent in the hour of danger to abandon the post which has been confided to me," she replied, in the course of a long speech. Were she an encumbrance, were the Emperor's name an obstacle in the way of the defence, then the deputies must pronounce the deposition. She could not herself betray her trust. The wise and patriotic course, she pleaded, was for the country's representatives to rally round her and the Government and to unite in opposing the invaders. Was it not possible that she might obtain less harsh terms of peace? She went on to say that she had the day before received from the representative of a Great Power (Russia, though the name was not revealed) a proposal for mediation which would guarantee the integrity of France and the maintenance of the dynasty. The second condition she had refused. "The maintenance of the dynasty is a matter which concerns France alone, and I will never permit foreign Powers to interfere in our internal affairs."

Her eloquence had not the desired effect. The deputies were firm, and at last she was compelled to yield, declaring that nothing could hereafter remove the bitter memory of that hour for her, the crowned sovereign of their holidays, whom they were driving away in the time of peril.

370 The Last Empress of the French  
She would resign her powers if Palikao thought it necessary. Palikao could not think otherwise, and the deputies, after kissing the Empress's hand, retired to announce at the Palais Bourbon the success of their mission.

The Second Empire was at an end. Only the last vestiges of its rule remained to be swept away. From the early hours of Sunday morning, when the placards in the streets revealed the story of Sedan, revolution was on foot. Crowds were gathering everywhere. Round the Tuileries were what Count Irisson d'Hérison graphically describes as "the ragged creatures with sinister heads, watching the Palace, come no one knew whence and only seen at such times." Like beasts of prey waiting for a spring they surrounded the enclosure of the Tuileries. Gradually they began to press against the railings and to knock the eagles off the gates. The ordinary garrison of Imperial Guards was drawn up in front of the main entrance, but plainly it would not be able to protect the Palace against the mob. Moreover, the Empress again insisted that not a single drop of blood should be shed for her, and would hear of no firing on the people. There was only one alternative. At half-past three the Prefect of Police rushed into the Palace crying: "We are betrayed! We cannot resist, the crowd is breaking down the railings.

### Third Regency and the Flight 371

Her Majesty's one hope lies in immediate flight !”

That morning, before the Council of Regency had met, Eugénie had sent off a telegram to Spain: “Keep up your courage, dear mother. If France wishes to defend herself, she has the power. I shall do my duty. Your unhappy daughter Eugénie.” Now, seven or eight hours later, she was not suddenly deprived of her courage. It was hardly even a bodily breakdown which compelled her to desert her post, as she had herself expressed it; although there was ample excuse for such a breakdown after the weeks of anxious days and wakeful nights through which she maintained her powers by drugs. But flight was, as has been said, the only alternative to the armed resistance of which she would not hear. There was no one on whose influence with the troops or the people she could rely. Old Count Palikao had only been able to advise her to yield. Trochu was at the Hôtel de Ville negotiating with Jules Favre and others, preparatory to becoming President of the Government. At her side were two powerful counsellors urging her to go. These were Metternich and Nigra, the Austrian and Italian Ambassadors. Even before the Prefect of Police arrived they had led the Empress to the window and pointed out the mob surrounding the railings. Always mind-

372 The Last Empress of the French  
ful of Marie Antoinette, Eugénie exclaimed:  
“They shall not have a second Queen to in-  
sult!” After the Prefect’s terrified advice the  
Ambassadors redoubled their entreaties and the  
Empress, wavering for some hours past, at last  
gave way. Metternich and Nigra have been  
severely censured for the part they played. It  
is suggested that they were anxious to see the  
dynasty’s fall, owing to the fact that through  
them their countries had a verbal understand-  
ing with Napoleon to come to his aid against  
Prussia in certain contingencies. France now  
being beaten, it was better that the witness of  
the understanding should be unable to return  
to Paris. Hence Eugénie’s flight would be of  
service to them. If this were the true ex-  
planation of their advice, their conduct would  
certainly appear very base, for both, especially  
Metternich, had been treated as intimate friends  
in the Palace. But, whatever the truth about  
a secret understanding between Metternich,  
Nigra, and Napoleon with regard to Prussia,  
there does not seem sufficient reason to con-  
demn the Ambassadors’ advice as insincere. No  
one on the spot could have counselled the  
Empress to face the Paris mob unarmed and  
almost alone, waiting for the chivalry of General  
Trochu to rescue her, in case of danger to her  
life. Nor, even if she came to no harm, would  
her stay in Paris have delayed the proclamation



### Third Regency and the Flight 373

of the Republic. The curtain was already rung down.

When the decision was taken, there was no delay. As the Empress bade good-bye to her ladies, of whom only Madame Lebreton, the widowed sister of General Bourbaki, was to accompany her, she exclaimed to them: "In France no one has the right to be unfortunate" — the only bitter saying recorded at her farewell to the Tuileries.<sup>1</sup> The ladies all kissed her hand, and then, Metternich taking her arm and Nigra Madame Lebreton's, while Admiral de la Gravière and two other faithful Frenchmen led the way, the party hurried through the Louvre Galleries to the door on the Place Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. An attempt to get out through one of the Palace gates was abandoned as too dangerous. A sign of the haste of the departure was that, when the Palace was entered by the new Government's agents, on the Empress's dressing-table were found a handkerchief and a bag with night-dresses and a few other clothes, while a waiting woman in tears said to the invaders "She has gone without even a handkerchief."

For Eugénie this was no time for tears. It was drawing near to four o'clock when she and

<sup>1</sup> Madame Carette says that her parting words were: "No, not *adieu!* *Au revoir!* We shall meet again, shall we not?" —turning back for a last look as she went from the room.

374 The Last Empress of the French  
her small escort reached the street. As they stood a while in the doorway to let a crowd pass, Nigra took the Empress's arm and asked her if she felt alarmed. "Do you feel me tremble?" she replied. As soon as it was safe, a cab was called. An observant street arab, who recognised the fugitives, was silenced by a kick from the Italian Ambassador, and the Empress and Madame Lebreton stepped in, while Metternich gave the cabman the address of M. Besson, Councillor of State, in the Boulevard Haussmann. The Ambassadors, their last unusual duties accomplished, said good-bye, and Eugénie drove off—thus curiously falsifying her saying, "I shall never run away in a cab like Charles X. and Louis Philippe."

Now enters into the story a person who has aptly been called "the one hero" in the career of the Empress Eugénie.<sup>1</sup> When the Empress reached M. Besson's house she found no one there. In her distress she could only think of one refuge. She told the cabman to take her to the house in the Avenue de l'Impératrice of Dr Evans, the American dentist retained by Napoleon III. and employed also by the Tsar and other European sovereigns. Dr Thomas Evans had been a friend as well as dentist to Louis Napoleon from the days of his Presidency.

<sup>1</sup> So called by the author of a very interesting notice in *Truth*, 14th December 1905, of the Evans Memoirs.

### Third Regency and the Flight 375

He was an amiable enthusiast about the Emperor and all connected with him—not excluding even “Madame H——,”<sup>1</sup> whose irregular position severely strained the conscience of the churchwarden of the American Methodist Episcopal Church in the Rue de Berry. If possible he was even more enthusiastic about the Empress Eugénie than about Napoleon himself. His memoirs, ingenuously entertaining throughout, are really valuable in their description of the Empress’s flight, since the details were known only to the rescuer and the rescued.

Dr Evans was not at home when his visitors arrived, and his wife was away at Deauville. The Empress said she would wait to see him. He returned about six o’clock and, being told that two ladies were anxious to see him, went into his library to find the Empress and her companion. Clad in a black cashmere dress (which she had been unable to change, day or night, for nearly a week), with a white linen collar, and wearing a hard black felt hat with a black veil, the lady of his adoration was indeed a destitute suppliant. She had nothing else with her but a mackintosh and a small reticule containing two handkerchiefs. Evans hastened to assure her of the protection which she begged. She wished to reach England, if possible, and suggested catching the Havre train at Poissy,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 37.

376 The Last Empress of the French  
fifteen miles from Paris. Evans took counsel with his assistant, afterwards the editor of his memoirs, Dr Crane. They decided that it would be best to join Mrs Evans at Deauville and to drive thither with relays of horses instead of travelling by train. The Empress fortunately had with her a passport made out at the British Embassy for an English doctor and a lady patient, duly *visé* but for some reason unused. A plot was at once concocted, whereby Crane became the doctor, the Empress the patient, Evans her brother, and Madame Lebreton a nurse. The ladies then went to bed, while the others made preparations for a start at half-past five the next morning.

The second volume of the Evans Memoirs gives a long and very graphic account of the journey to the coast. The Empress rose at five on the morning of Monday, the 5th September. After a breakfast of coffee and rolls, the party of four drove in the Doctor's landau to the city gates, where, owing to Evans's manifest American nationality and the Empress's complete disguise, they were allowed to pass through with hardly a question. At Saint-Germain-en-Laye they ran the gauntlet of the *octroi* with like ease and by eleven were at Nantes. Another carriage and horses were there procured. Evans recalls that, after leaving Nantes, he gave the Empress the news which he had just read in the Paris papers

### Third Regency and the Flight 377

about the proclamation of the Republic with Trochu as President of the Government. It required the actual production of the *Journal Officiel* to persuade her of Trochu's conduct. When she read the words of his appointment as President, says Evans, the paper dropped from her hands and she exclaimed:—

“‘How was it possible for him so to betray me!’ Then after a few moments she continued: ‘Only yesterday morning, spontaneously, of his own volition, he pledged to me, on his honour as a soldier, on his faith as a Catholic and a Breton, that he would never desert me, that whoever might wish to harm me would have to pass first over his dead body; and those words were spoken with such apparent emotion that I could not suspect his sincerity. . . . Whom could I have trusted if not him—a soldier selected by the Emperor himself as specially trustworthy, whose accepted duty it was to defend me, who to the last hour swore fealty?’”

These words reported by Evans remind us of the story told by Madame Carette, but the Empress's affirmation of her implicit trust is hardly what would be expected, and, when we read Evans's comment that it was not so much the setting up of the Republic that distressed her as “her discovery of the treachery of the soldier, the avowed friend and protector in whom she had trusted,” we can but wonder, without making an

378 The Last Empress of the French  
attempt to reconcile the various accounts of the  
episode of Trochu's Governorship of Paris.<sup>1</sup>

The journey to Deauville continued with few incidents. Monday night was passed at a small wayside inn, where the Empress, as she afterwards related with amusement, played her part of invalid as well as she could. Mrs Evans's house was reached at noon next day, and the Doctor relates that, wearied and exhausted, the Empress sank into a chair crying: "Thank God! Saved!"

It remained to cross the Channel. Fortunately it happened that in the neighbouring harbour of Trouville there lay a 42-ton yacht belonging to Sir John Burgoyne, who had come to fetch his wife from France. Evans and Crane came on board the *Gazelle*, and Evans, giving the owner his card, asked him if he would take under the protection of the British flag the fugitive Empress of the French. Burgoyne was incredulous and sent Evans to his wife, who recognised him. Lady Burgoyne overcame her husband's reluct-

<sup>1</sup>The Empress Eugénie herself always declined to enter into the controversy as to Trochu's conduct. Evans quotes a letter sent by her to himself on the 22nd October 1896, when he had written to the *Gaulois* about certain statements in the Trochu Memoirs:—"You will understand, I hope, that I am quite resolved to reply to nothing, however painful it may be to me. A war of recrimination and justification is repugnant to me. I have faith to believe that to the Emperor first, and to me perhaps (?), Time will do justice." (Evans Memoirs, II. p. 554.)

ance, after he had stipulated that the Empress should not come on board until midnight. The Englishman's hesitation was justified by the fact that at eleven o'clock a French police agent boarded the *Gazelle* but, finding nothing suspicious, departed. Sir John Burgoyne says in his narrative<sup>1</sup>:—

“Just before midnight I walked along the quay and met the Empress and Dr Evans walking together. Her Majesty, who was dressed in black and was closely veiled, came toward me and said: ‘You are the English gentleman who will take me to England?’ Saluting, I answered, ‘I am Sir John Burgoyne, your Majesty,’ and conducted her across the plank gangway on board the *Gazelle*, and presented Lady Burgoyne to her.”

In his official report to the British Government Sir John Burgoyne states that the Empress's only remark as she came on board was “I know I am safe now, under the protection of an Englishman.” After that she broke down and lamented “poor France.”

The voyage across the Channel was the most dangerous part of the whole journey. Starting at seven in the morning the *Gazelle* ran into a tremendous sea as she approached the English coast and hove to until the tide slackened. Sir John Burgoyne bears testimony to the example

<sup>1</sup> See *Century Magazine*, October 1905.

380 The Last Empress of the French set by the Empress, who exhibited "a cool courage and a consideration for others which won the esteem of everyone on board." Her actual feelings at the time are plainly revealed in a letter which she wrote immediately afterwards to Madame Carette. "I believed that we should all be lost," she said. "But death in such a raging storm seemed to me easy and welcome. I expected to disappear and that none would know I meant to take refuge in England. What had become of me would never have been discovered, and my end would have been lost in impenetrable mystery." That dramatic close to a career, however, was not to be. At length the Solent was reached and at four A.M. on the 8th September the *Gazelle* anchored off Ryde. Three hours later the Empress Eugénie set foot on English soil, henceforward her home.



THE EMPRESS IN EXILE







The Emperor, Empress, and Prince Imperial at Chislehurst,

From Photograph by Flamant, 1873.

## CHAPTER XX

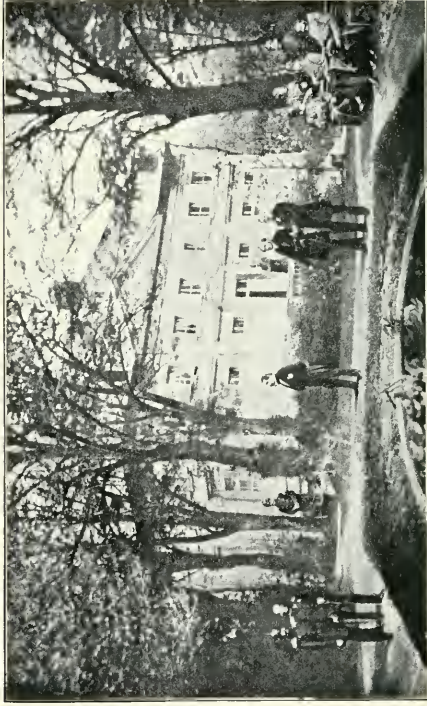
### THE EMPRESS IN EXILE

THE first thought of the Empress on landing at Ryde was of the Prince Imperial. On the journey through France she had talked about him anxiously and now she gladly assented to the proposal of Dr Evans that they should go to Brighton, where he held out hopes of news of the Prince's position being obtainable. Seeing that Evans had read in a Ryde paper that the Prince was at Hastings, we can but wonder at his roundabout method of gratifying the mother's desire to see him. Obviously, however, the worthy man dreaded the effect of excessive emotion on his charge. At the dinner-table at Brighton, which they had reached in the afternoon after leaving Ryde, he let her know where the Prince was stopping. The effect was electrical, he records. "She rose up quickly, left the table, and insisted upon going immediately to meet her son." Even at Hastings the Doctor left the ladies at one hotel while he went to find Prince Louis at another. The boy was at the Marine Hotel with a few friends, and eagerly questioned Evans about his mother, of

384 The Last Empress of the French whom nothing had been heard for four days. Telling him that she was safe and that he would go and make enquiries, Evans hastened back to the Empress. It was now quite late, but she was set on going at once to the Marine Hotel. Neither time nor intended kindness could keep mother and son apart any longer. Followed by the Doctor and Madame Lebreton, she flew to the Prince, and the two were reunited for the first time since they parted on the platform at Saint-Cloud on the 28th July.

At last the Empress felt justified in giving way to the exhaustion which she had been enduring so long, and for several days she was confined to the room which she took at the Marine Hotel. In the meantime the news of her arrival spread rapidly, and almost as soon as she was ready to see them she had a small court about her, made up of the Duke and Duchess of Mouchy and other prominent exiles. There could be no hope of Napoleon joining them yet. His imprisonment at Wilhelmshöhe (once the palace of his uncle Jerome) had begun on the evening when Eugénie was acting the invalid at the wayside inn, and had yet seven months to run. But preparations must be made for the coming life in exile, and the faithful Dr Evans was entrusted with the duty of looking for a suitable house in Kent. It was not altogether accidental that he came to choose Camden Place, Chisle-





Wilhelmshöhe.



hurst, a spot ever afterwards to be remembered for its connection with Napoleon III. and his wife. As he tells in the Memoirs, he remembered Napoleon speaking to him once of pleasant days spent at Tunbridge Wells. Thither Evans went, and looking round the neighbourhood he came upon Camden Place. It pleased him and his wife, as it did the Empress's niece who came to inspect it on her behalf, and the owner was persuaded to let it to the Empress. Afterwards it was discovered that Prince Louis Napoleon had been a visitor to a former owner in his early exile.

On the 24th September, twenty days after leaving Paris and sixteen after landing in England, the Empress Eugénie arrived at Camden Place, her home for the next ten years. She grew reconciled to her surroundings as rapidly as could be expected, recovered her health, and even began to talk again with the animation which had marked her of old. All references to French politics, however, were avoided at her desire, not because these politics had ceased to interest her but because they interested her too much. Her enemies represented her at this period as working strenuously for a Bonapartist restoration, preferably for the proclamation of Prince Louis as Napoleon IV., with herself as Regent. This was very far from the facts. Five days after she reached Hastings she wrote

386 The Last Empress of the French  
to the Tsar entreating him to try to secure for France an honourable and lasting peace; she did not add a word about the dynasty. She asked him, it is true, to keep secret the fact of her writing to him for the reason that, as she said, an erroneous interpretation might be put on all she did at this moment. She also appealed to the other Powers of Europe, but always on behalf of France, not of the Bonapartes. On all sides she found a resolve not to interfere owing to the internal political situation in the country.

Eugénie probably expected no recognition of the sincerity of her efforts. She certainly received none, but on the contrary was freely accused of discreditable intrigues, both then and subsequently. Her assailants did not trouble to produce evidence in support of their charges, no doubt considering that the character which they assigned to her was sufficient evidence in itself of her willingness to stoop to any means which promised a return to power. With the one notorious, yet still inexplicable, intrigue even they could not connect her. On the 14th September, the day after Eugénie had written to the Tsar, a hitherto obscure Frenchman named Régnier called at the Marine Hotel at Hastings and asked for the Empress. She refused to see him, knowing nothing about him. Régnier then waylaid the Prince Imperial and his tutor on the promenade, told the Prince he was going to





**Camden Place, Chislehurst.**  
From a Photo. by W. J. Roberts.

communicate with the Emperor, and asked him to sign his name on a photograph of Hastings to show his father. The Prince was naturally off his guard and wrote a few lines with his name after them. Régnier immediately left for France, appeared to Bismarck at Ferrières, and showing him the photograph seems strangely enough to have convinced him that he was an agent from the Empress and Prince. At any rate he was passed under safe conduct into Metz, where he told Bazaine that he came from the Empress, who was about to sign a treaty with Prussia and desired to have a representative of the Metz Army at her side while she did so. Bazaine fell into the trap and sent Bourbaki out with Régnier. The Prussians passed both through their lines; but, while Bourbaki proceeded to the Belgian frontier, Régnier disappeared from view.

Consequently the next scene left everyone in a state of mystification. Bourbaki (who, it will be remembered, was brother to Madame Lebreton) arrived at Camden Place at breakfast-time on the 27th September. The Empress, in utter astonishment, asked the cause of his appearance. The General, who thought that he had been summoned to her, was equally stupefied, and the interview was unpleasant and painful to both. Nor was the situation any better when it was discovered that Régnier, for some unknown

388 The Last Empress of the French purpose, had duped Bazaine. Bourbaki retired to France leaving the puzzle unsolved, as it remains to this day; and in the following month Metz surrendered. Before the capitulation Bazaine was allowed to send another of his generals to the Empress, still recognised as Regent by the Army at Metz, to gain her consent to the terms. General Boyer came to Camden Place and was received by the Empress, first alone and then in the presence of the leading Bonapartist refugees, including Prince Napoleon. Eugénie, who had already been acutely distressed by Bourbaki's description of the garrison's sufferings, was still further harrowed by what she learnt from Boyer. But when urged by him to agree to the Prussian terms, whatever they might be, she declined. Rather than sign away any French territory she would have Metz surrender unconditionally. With her refusal departed the hope of an Imperialist restoration, which King William was supposed to favour in the form of a regency of the Empress on behalf of the Prince Imperial. Had Eugénie really craved merely a return to power, as her enemies alleged, she certainly would not have thrown away the chance because she suspected that the blank treaty which she was asked to sign would involve a cession of territory, which must be inevitable in any case.

On the 27th October Metz surrendered, and

to Eugénie was left only the melancholy task of writing to thank the generals and the troops under their command for the brave resistance which they had made. But another and a more personal blow followed swiftly for the unfortunate Empress. Little more than a month after the fall of Metz bad news came from Wilhelmshöhe about Napoleon's bodily state. The Duchess of Mouchy calling upon her aunt at Camden Place, and finding her still in ignorance of the cause of Napoleon's sufferings, decided to tell her about the consultation of doctors in the previous July, before the war began. Eugénie, asking piteously why this had been kept from her, set out at once for Germany and was permitted to see the captive for a few hours, and to assure herself at least that death was not absolutely imminent.

In the following March husband, wife, and child were once more together, Napoleon arriving in Dover from Ostend on the 20th of the month, and being met by the Empress, the Prince Imperial and all his relatives and adherents in exile in England. Hastening to avoid an unexpectedly warm welcome from the crowd, they left Dover almost at once and the same afternoon were at Camden Place.

It is not intended in this book to describe the life in exile of the Empress Eugénie. The two principal events in that life have been the two

390 The Last Empress of the French  
great sorrows which left her, within nine years of the time when she reigned in Paris the wife of an Emperor and the mother of his heir, a childless widow mourning in a foreign land. To these two events brief allusion will be made before this account of her career is brought to a close.

Napoleon III., when he came to Chislehurst, was a man under sentence of death. A few years' respite was the utmost that he could expect. His fondest hopes, like those of his wife, were centred in the boy who still might come in for the heritage which they had once seemed destined to hand over to him. So, while the life at Camden Place was one of studious retirement, it had a dominant interest in the subject of the education of the son of Napoleon and Eugénie. Although his mother's influence remained very strong over Prince Louis, his father was able to devote more time to him than had been possible at the Tuileries. First under the charge of his private tutor and then for a brief while at King's College, London, the Prince was prepared for Woolwich. In the October of 1871, when he was nearing his sixteenth year, he became a cadet at the Royal Military Academy, to the great satisfaction of his parents.

We need not dwell on the last painful days of the Emperor's life. In the autumn of 1872, in spite of a visit to the Isle of Wight, his



health became alarmingly bad. On the last day of October a consultation was held at Camden Place between Sir James Paget, Sir William Gull, and Dr Conneau, and on the 24th December the same three met again with the addition of Sir Henry Thompson. They decided on operation. There was no need to keep the Empress out of the secret now. Two operations were performed on the 2nd and 6th January, and a third was fixed for the 9th. The doctors arrived, and at eleven in the morning the Empress sat waiting the result, having her carriage in readiness to drive over to the Prince Imperial at Woolwich to tell the news. Suddenly an urgent message was brought to her from the sick-room. She hurried in and found the Emperor unconscious and barely breathing. "He is dying!" she cried; and she spoke the truth. The priest came in and administered the sacrament and Napoleon passed away. According to some accounts he did not regain consciousness sufficiently to recognise anyone; according to others<sup>1</sup> he was able to look at his wife at the instant before death. All agree in making his last intelligible utterance to have been: "Conneau, were you at Sedan?" — a pathetic proof of the way in which that terrible

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Evans, who says that his eyes were fixed on the Empress as she bent over him, and his lips moved (Mem. II. 603). The Memoirs give very full details of the last illness, but Evans was not present at the death-bed.

392 The Last Empress of the French  
memory had burned itself into the soul of  
Napoleon the Silent.

Prince Louis, who had been summoned immediately that a fatal ending was foreseen, arrived too late to find his father alive. His mother, who had been kneeling at the bedside since the moment of death, arose to meet him as he entered the room divining rather than knowing what had happened. Throwing her arms about him she sobbed "*Je n'ai plus que toi, Louis!*" and with him she knelt down once more to pray.

The ex-Emperor's body was embalmed, and in order to allow for the attendance of all Napoleon's friends, sympathisers, and former subjects who might desire to be present at the funeral, the ceremony was fixed for the 15th January, six days after the death. The body meanwhile lay in state in the hall at Camden Place, and was viewed by vast numbers of visitors. The funeral service took place shortly before noon on the day appointed. The Empress, utterly worn out by a long vigil beside the coffin, was unable to be present. With a few ladies she remained in her own room, while the Prince Imperial, Prince Napoleon and his wife and sister, the Princes Lucien and Charles Bonaparte and Joachim Murat represented the Imperial family in the church of St Mary. A remarkable gathering of Imperialist exiles at-

tended the funeral, including indeed nearly all the well-known names of the Second Empire. After the return of the Prince Imperial to Camden House with his nearest relatives a strange and dramatic scene was witnessed, for, as he came out of the house to thank the crowd awaiting outside for their attendance at the funeral, the cry of "*Vive Napoléon IV.!*" was raised and instantly taken up by all. The Prince, overcome by emotion, hurried back into the house, while the shouts still rang out in the grounds.

With the death of her husband, the Empress Eugénie felt her responsibility as mother of "Napoleon IV." weigh upon her much more heavily. On his eighteenth birthday the Prince attained his political majority and of course became the object of regard for countless interested persons, who wished to serve him and his cause—for a consideration. Against these the Empress was above all anxious to protect him. She is quoted by Madame Carette as saying: "My son's fortune is his dignity, and that I will guard at all costs." Her careful control over him was widely misinterpreted. She was represented as parsimonious and tyrannical, the Prince as lonely, bored, and melancholy. He was, in reality, a true son of his father in his absorption in work, and his rather solitary existence was a matter of his own choice, not forced upon

him against his will. He was not in such awe of his supposed tyrant that he did not dare to insist on one occasion in dressing her up in his cadet's cap and jacket, and on another in gathering her up bodily and running upstairs with her. She held the purse, it is true, but he himself insisted always on referring all matters of money to his mother, and her husbanding of the family funds was certainly natural in view of the possibility of a Bonapartist restoration. The adventurer Louis Napoleon of 1848 had to draw from no very creditable source much of the money which he required. There would have been no such necessity for the Fourth Napoleon, had he lived to become a serious pretender to the throne of France.

After leaving Woolwich the Prince Imperial was attached as officer to an artillery corps in the British Army, and while continuing to reside at Camden Place used to go over to Aldershot for the manœuvres each year. His military work interested him and he showed a genuine ability, to which among others Sir Evelyn Wood bore very high testimony.<sup>1</sup> When early in 1879

<sup>1</sup> He writes ("From Midshipman to Fieldmarshal," II. p. 72):—"The young Prince impressed me much by his soldier-like ideas and habits, and was unwearied in endeavouring to acquire knowledge and military experience." Again (*ib.* p. 75):—"He had been unusually well taught; his plans submitted for forts to defend depots showing not only great natural talent, but that he had thoroughly assimilated the sound instruction imparted at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich."

the Zulu War broke out in South Africa and the corps to which the Prince was attached was ordered South, it was but natural that he should be struck with the desire to see some active service. Is it necessary to conclude that he was unhappy at home because at the age of twenty-three he wished to share the lot of his comrades in the Army? There have been writers who have thought so.

It was with the utmost difficulty that the Prince prevailed upon his mother to consent to his departure. Only because she saw that he had set his heart upon it, and because she did not wish to appear to domineer over him, did she at last reluctantly yield. Having done so, she joined him in his appeal to the British Government to permit him to volunteer. Permission was given, after a preliminary refusal by the Duke of Cambridge. Three days later the Prince was on his way to the land of his sad yet eminently honourable death.

The story is too well known to need re-telling. It was on the morning of the 1st June 1879 that the Prince Imperial rode out from camp with a British officer and six Colonial troopers on a sketching expedition. News of his death was brought back in the evening by the officer and the four surviving troopers, and next morning the body, pierced with eighteen assegais, was recovered where it lay near the Ityatosi River.

## 396 The Last Empress of the French

When the news reached England immediate steps were taken that the unhappy mother should learn her loss in the least painful way possible. A messenger from Windsor was sent to the Duke of Bassano, once Grand Chamberlain to Napoleon III. and still a constant attendant on his former Empress. The old man was reluctant to undertake so terrible a task as breaking to the mother the news of the death of one to whom he too was devoted. He yielded, however, to the argument that the shock would be far greater if the Empress should be enlightened by ordinary means. He went therefore to her at once. She saw from his face that something was wrong. "You have heard news from Zululand?" she cried, "Louis is wounded?" Bassano could not speak, but as the Empress went on to urge that instant preparations should be made for her to go out to nurse the Prince, his tears began to flow, and the Empress understood all.

Her friends feared that she would succumb to the blow, so ill was she on this first day. When she rallied, her state was still more pitiable. A description has been left in the letters of Queen Victoria to the Duke of Cambridge which pictures this vividly. On the first receipt of the news the Queen had written in her characteristic style to her cousin:—

"This is awful, so fearful. I *don't* know what to say, and one is *verstummt* before so dreadful a





The Empress in later life.



catastrophe! . . . I shall go and see his desolate mother as soon as possible. . . . Hers is a fearful lot. God alone can comfort and sustain her.”

A little later she wrote to the Duke:—

“I went this afternoon and sat with the dear Empress, and it is quite heart-breaking to see her—*so* gentle, uncomplaining, and resigned, yet *so* broken-hearted. And one can say nothing to comfort her. I never felt anything more, and am quite miserable and overwhelmed by it. Poor dear! She asked me, Did I think it possible it might not be true, and that it might be someone else? But I said I thought *that* was *impossible*, for his dear remains were at once recognised.”<sup>1</sup>

When the first passion of the Empress's grief was over, rumours began to be circulated that she would retire to a convent for the remainder of her life. The Empress, however, neither died, as it was at first feared she might do, nor took the veil. She was possessed by an intense desire to visit the spot where her son fell, though his remains had been conveyed promptly to Chislehurst. She was able to carry out her wish. Reading in the papers a touching allusion to her son in the speech of General Sir Evelyn Wood at the banquet given to him by the Fishmongers' Company at the end of September, she asked him

<sup>1</sup>Both the letters from which these quotations are made are given in the Rev. Edgar Sheppard's "George, Duke of Cambridge."

398 The Last Empress of the French to come and see her at Camden Place. Several long interviews followed, and then the General was commanded to Windsor and asked to take charge of the Empress Eugénie on a journey to the scene of the Prince Imperial's death. Sir Evelyn has given a short account of this journey in the second volume of his "From Midshipman to Fieldmarshal," and in the newspapers of the day may be found some supplementary details. The Empress left Southampton in March 1880, accompanied by Sir Evelyn and Lady Wood, the Marquis of Bassano (son of the Duke), the Hon. Mrs Ronald Campbell, a doctor, and some servants. Queen Victoria had enjoined the greatest care for the Empress's safety, in reply to which Sir Evelyn stipulated that the Empress should follow his instructions as though she was a soldier under his command—a duty which did not prove irksome to her. On her arrival in South Africa, she was assigned rooms at Government House, Capetown, and at Durban a private residence was found for her. The strictest retirement was observed by her express request, and the sympathetic South Africans could only testify their feelings by writing their names in a visitors' book. From Durban she went to Maritzburg, and at the end of April she started, with a party numbering eighty in all, for the Blood River and Zululand. Sir Evelyn Wood records that the Empress wished to ride all the

way (she had not forgotten her horsemanship) ; but he thought it better to drive her in a "spider" with four horses, the rest travelling in waggons. In such a carriage he drove her, over rugged tracks and imposing heights and along unfenced mountain roads, for the greater part of eight hundred miles before they re-embarked for England. Only in one respect did the Empress prove a difficult charge. She always desired that the "spider" should travel fast, for the old daring spirit was not entirely dead in her even now, crushed down as she was by grief.

It was near the end of May when the party arrived at the Ityatosi River and the scene of the Prince's death. Already a marble cross, the gift of Queen Victoria, had reached the spot and had been set up in place of an earlier and rougher memorial. The ground had been enclosed, and Sir Evelyn Wood now procured from the local Zulu headman a lease of all the land within a radius of two miles round it. On the 1st June, one year after the Prince's death, his mother was present at a requiem service at the very place where he had died. After the conclusion of the service she remained in solitary vigil all night, alone with her sorrow.

Full details were procured of the way in which the Prince met his doom. Eighteen Zulus were interviewed by Sir Evelyn Wood, from whose evidence the story was reconstructed.

## 400 The Last Empress of the French

The mourning mother had what satisfaction was to be derived from an almost exact knowledge of her son's last moments. From Sir Evelyn she had already heard his opinion of the young soldier's talents, a very high opinion, as we have seen. On her return to Durban she visited the *Danube*, the steamer which had brought the Prince from England and learnt from the captain how he had spent his days at sea. No more questions remained to be asked. The Empress had indeed pressed her painful breast against the thorn. In July she set her face homeward again toward England, taking with her a full stock of memories of her only child. As an outward memento of the visit she brought some bunches of the high African grasses growing about the monument. Some of these were fashioned into a cross upon the wall of the Farnborough mausoleum, others were used to decorate the room in which all the Prince Imperial's childish and later belongings were put when the move was made from Camden Place to a new home.

For, on her return to England, the Empress Eugénie began to think of leaving the house at Chislehurst where she had now spent ten years of exile. Not only were the associations overpoweringly sad, but also she experienced great difficulty in finding at Chislehurst a suitable spot for the tomb which she desired to build for

the remains of her husband and son. There was a report that she might retire to Arenenberg, once the home of Napoleon's mother Hortense, which had passed to her on his death and remained hers until in 1906 she presented it to the Swiss canton of Thurgau, in which the castle is situated. But she did not leave England. It was finally decided by her to move to Farnborough Hill, a mansion standing in extensive grounds in Hampshire, thirty-two miles from London, and close to Aldershot. The owner was the head of the publishing firm of Longman, who had built the house and who agreed to sell it and the grounds to the Empress. Hither accordingly she removed in 1881, and here she has lived ever since. She has had the house considerably enlarged and has built in particular a room intended one day to be a Napoleonic museum. In the house she has all the relics of Napoleon III. and the Prince Imperial collected. The mausoleum for the actual reception of their remains takes the form of a chapel completed in 1884 and dedicated to St Michael, the tombs being in a crypt under the chancel, Napoleon's on the right hand side, the Prince's on the left. On the left also is the place designed by the Empress for her own burial when the time comes for her to follow those whom she loved.

After the death of the Prince Imperial the

## 402 The Last Empress of the French

Empress Eugénie earned the privilege, if ever any character in history has done so, of veiling her life in the privacy which is generally denied to historical personages. As the wife of the Emperor of the French, even when that Emperor had become an exile with no hope of a personal restoration, she could not be merely a private individual in whatever country she made her residence. As mother of a still possible occupant of the throne of France, she could not yet be allowed to pass her existence in absolute retirement. It was at least conceivable, while her son lived, that she might one day be seen again in the Tuileries where she had reigned and charmed before. There was, therefore, nothing very unreasonable in the curiosity which desired to know all that might be known about the life of the ex-Empress. But since she became in 1880 only the sorrowing widow and childless mother of the last Imperial Napoleons, it would be an impertinence to attempt to disturb her privacy. What is to be made public about her existence at Farnborough can only be revealed, if ever, when the silence has been broken by her own permission.

The Empress Eugénie, however, has not withdrawn totally from the view of the outside world since she left Chislehurst. In the early years of her second bereavement she was prevailed

upon by the late Queen Victoria to visit both Osborne and the Scottish Highlands with the Royal Family. The friendship which began with the French visit to Windsor grew stronger with Queen Victoria's visits to Chislehurst in 1871 and 1879 and remained unbroken until 1901, when death robbed the Empress of her steadfast admirer and protector.

Nor has the Empress Eugénie confined her travels to Great Britain. As early as May 1882 she stopped in Paris (which she had already hurriedly passed through when returning from South Africa in 1879) on her way back from the Riviera, and since then she has frequently been in the French capital, where the former malice which pursued her so relentlessly has happily died away and been forgotten. Her passion for wandering, originally acquired, perhaps, in her early days of European touring with her mother, has taken her all over the Continent. 1906, the year of her eightieth birthday, saw her exceptionally active, and indeed public mentions of her name were quite numerous again. At the beginning of the year interest was aroused by her presentation to Spain, through the Marquis of Villalobar, of the insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece bestowed by a none too willing Spanish King upon the First Napoleon and his brother Louis a hundred years before. Then came her gift of the castle of Arenenberg to the

404 The Last Empress of the French Swiss canton in which it stood. In connection with the courtship by the young King Alfonso of Spain of the Princess Victoria Eugénie of Battenberg, the name of the Empress Eugénie, her godmother, was often heard, and indeed the marriage was commonly attributed to her influence, her interest in both bride and bridegroom, but particularly the bride, being well known.

The tour by which she celebrated her eightieth year was a remarkable achievement, for she visited Italy and ascended to the top of Vesuvius, lately in eruption, and then proceeded by way of Venice to Ischl to meet the Emperor Francis Joseph. He (only four years her junior) had written to her in May to congratulate her on her birthday, and she went to Ischl in July to thank him and, as she said, to take her last farewell of him. The Viennese papers of the day were full of stories of the Emperor's chivalrous welcome to his guest during the few days which she spent at the Hôtel Elizabeth, named after the sad-fated Empress, his wife, and her companion during some of her Continental holidays in the Eighties. The Princess Metternich, once the brilliant *Ambassadrice*, was invited to meet her former hostess and friend of the Tuileries, but was prevented by illness from going to Ischl. After two days in the society of the Emperor Francis Joseph, the Empress Eugénie returned through Salzburg and Paris to spend the re-



mainder of a year which had opened with so unusual a display of vigorous age in the quiet retirement of her Hampshire home, surrounded by the memorials, both sad and glorious, of her former life and state.

## INDEX

- ALBA, Duchess of (sister of the Empress Eugénie), 12 *ff.*, 23, 25, 127, 259
- Alba, Duke of Berwick and, 24-5, 127
- Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, 164, 173, 317
- Albert, Prince Consort, 160 *ff.*, 175, 228-30
- Alexander, Tsar, 209, 315, 386
- Aumale, Duke of, 28, 290
- BASSANO, Duke of, 103
- Bazaine, Marshal, 313, 387
- Benedetti, 338
- Beyle, Henri, 16
- Bismarck, Count, 297, 342
- Bonaparte, Prince Pierre, 125, 331
- Bonaparte family. *See* Clothilde, Princess; Jerome, ex-King; Louis, Prince Imperial; Mathilde, Princess; Napoleon III.; Napoleon, Prince
- Bouvet, Mlle. *See* Carette, Madame
- Bourbaki, General, 387
- Burgoyne, Sir John, 378
- CARETTE, Madame, 113, 151, 361, *etc.*
- Castiglione, Countess, 274-5
- Cavour, Count, 175, 238, 250, 287
- Charlotte, Archduchess (Empress of Mexico), 309-312
- Clothilde, Princess, 31, 240, 278
- Conneau, Dr, 190, 238, 391
- Cornu, Madame, 91 *n.*, 94
- Cowley, Lord, 42, 53
- EDWARD VII., King. *See* Albert Edward, Prince of Wales
- Evans, Dr T. W., 37 *n.*, 374 *ff.*, 383 *ff.*, *etc.*
- Eugénie, Empress, birth and family, 4 *ff.*; Scottish descent, 5; first visit to France, 14; at school in Eugénie, Empress—*cont.*  
Paris, 10; at Clifton, 21; appearance as a girl, 23, 27; love of mischief, 27, 280; at Madrid Court, 28; thinks of taking the veil, 29; early travels, 30 *ff.*; first sight of Napoleon, 30, 32-3; writes to the Prince President, 33, 36; in London in 1851, 34; at the Place Vendôme, 41; at Compiègne, 43; engagement, 46, 55; her trousseau, 68 *n.*; letter to Queen Isabella, 69; campaign of scandal against, 72, 101; wedding, 74 *ff.*; popular acts, 73, 100; appearance in 1853, 102; her *lundis*, 106-9; excessive good-nature, 112; as hostess, 112, 144 *ff.*, 314; attitude towards Napoleon's friends, 139, 153, 282; her staff, 149-52; and dress, 153 *ff.*, 335; first visit to Windsor, 164; friendship with Queen Victoria, 164 *ff.*, 403; as a mother, 179 *ff.*, 187 *ff.*, 352, 393; receives Golden Rose, 185; at height of her beauty, 196; and Home the medium, 203 *ff.*; and the Italian Question, 210, 249, 288, 320; in the Orsini outrage, 217, 222; in Brittany, 236; her first Regency, 242 *ff.*; her visit to Algiers, 256 *ff.*; grief at sister's death, 259; in Scotland, 262; and Court amusements, 109, 279; increasing political prominence, 291 *ff.*; at Madrid in 1862, 292; her second Regency, 294; at Council meetings, 296; on eve of Austro-Prussian War, 299; her courage in cholera year, 301; and the Mexican War, 306; and the Liberal Empire, 325; her Suez trip, 327 *ff.*; and the Franco-Prussian War, 335, 338, 344-7;

- Eugénie, Empress—*cont.*  
 at the Saint-Cloud Council, 343 ;  
 her third Regency, 351 ; at the  
 Tuileries in 1870, 355 *ff.* ; and  
 General Trochu, 359 *ff.*, 367,  
 377 ; prevents Napoleon's return,  
 360 ; her last day in Paris, 368-  
 76 ; flight, 376-80 ; in England,  
 383 ; goes to Camden Place, 385 ;  
 her efforts for peace, 386 ; at  
 Napoleon's death-bed, 391 ; pro-  
 tector of her son's position, 393 ;  
 and the Prince Imperial's death,  
 396 ; visits Zululand, 398 *ff.* ;  
 goes to Farnborough Hill, 401 ;  
 late years, 402 *ff.* ; characteristics,  
 4, 25, 27, 68, 100, 107, 112-3,  
 139, 150, 153, 165, 187 *ff.*, 218,  
 236, 242, 259, 280, 292, 299,  
 301, 314, 343, 346, 363, 380,  
 385, 393, 399
- FILON, Augustin, 8, 13, *etc.*  
 Fleury, General, 138  
 Flowers, Miss, 16  
 Fould, Achille, 75, 265  
 Francis Joseph, Emperor, 245, 329,  
 404  
 Francisca (sister of Empress  
 Eugénie). *See* Alba, Duchess of
- GARIBALDI, 256, 318  
 Gramont, Duke of, 334, 339, 342 *ff.*  
 Gravière, de la, Admiral, 354, 373  
 Greignée, Henri de, 7  
 Greville, Charles, 58, 111, 165, *etc.*
- HOHENLOHE, Princess Adelaide of,  
 51  
 Hohenzollern, Prince Antony of,  
 337, 341  
 Hohenzollern, Prince Leopold of,  
 337-338  
 Home, David Dunglas, 202 *ff.*  
 Howard, Henrietta, 36, 47-49
- IRVING, WASHINGTON, 12, 28  
 Isabella, Queen of Spain, 26, 28,  
 71, 336
- JECKER, 307  
 Jerome, ex-King, 57, 67, 117
- KIRKPATRICK, WILLIAM, (grand-  
 father of the Empress Eugénie),  
 7 *ff.*, 10 *n.*
- LEBOEUF, Marshal, 341, 343  
 Lebreton, Madame, 373  
 Louis, Prince Imperial, birth and  
 childhood, 179 *ff.* ; and his  
 parents, 187 ; popularity as a  
 child, 190 ; at return of troops  
 from Italy, 247 ; in the Franco-  
 Prussian War, 352-353 ; rejoins  
 his mother, 383 ; education in  
 England, 390 ; "Napoleon IV.,"  
 393 ; military promise, 394 ; goes  
 to Zululand, 395 ; death, 395
- MALAKOFF, Duke of, 226, 236  
 Malmesbury, Lord, 105, 200, 334,  
 340, *etc.*  
 Mathilde, Princess, 47, 49, 63, 112,  
 121-124, 277  
 Maximilian, Archduke (Emperor  
 of Mexico), 293, 308, 313  
 Maximilian II. of Bavaria, 199, 204  
 Mérimée, Prosper, 12, 16, 21 *ff.*, *etc.*  
 Metternich, Prince Richard, 269,  
 371-373  
 Metternich Princess Pauline, 269-  
 273, 404  
 Montijo, Count of, Cipriano (father  
 of the Empress Eugénie), 4 *ff.*,  
 13, 17  
 Montijo, Count of, Eugenio (uncle),  
 7, 12  
 Montijo, Countess of (mother), 4,  
 9 *ff.*, 21 *ff.*, 28, 32, 35, 41,  
 57 *ff.*, 71, 77, 126, 179, 352 *n.*  
 Morny, Duke of, 45, 52, 128 *ff.*, 266  
 294, 307  
 Mouchy, Duchess of, 125, 384
- NAPOLEON III., first meeting with  
 Eugénie, 30, 32-33 ; first offer to  
 her, 37, 45, 55, 57 ; early love  
 affairs, 46 *ff.* ; announces resolve  
 to marry Eugénie, 56 ; his  
*parvenu* speech, 64-66 ; wedding,  
 74 *ff.* ; character, 85 *ff.* ; looks,  
 92 ; faithlessness, 95, 115, 261 ;  
 insistence on etiquette, 104, 152 ;  
 his Court, 109 *ff.* ; and England,  
 159 *ff.*, 211 ; Pianori's attempt  
 on, 168-170 ; his pleasure at  
 Prince Imperial's birth, 180 ; as  
 father, 187 ; visits Osborne, 200 ;  
 Germany, 208 ; and the Italian  
 Question, 209, 237, 245, 287, 319 ;  
 Orsini's attempt on, 217, 221 ;  
 in Brittany, 235 ; at Plombières,  
 238 ; at New Year 1859, 239 ;

- Napoleon III. *cont.*  
 goes to Italy, 242; returns, 245;  
 visit to Savoy and Algiers, 256 *ff.*;  
 his anger with Prince Napoleon,  
 295; entertains Bismarck, 297;  
 his neutrality in 1866, 300; re-  
 sponsibility for Mexican War,  
 305; and the 1867 Exhibition,  
 317; and the Liberal Empire,  
 325 *ff.*; and the Franco-Prussian  
 War, 336, 346; his failing health,  
 351, 357; and General Trochu,  
 358, 362; his Sedan telegram,  
 367; arrives in England, 389;  
 his death, 391
- Napoleon, Prince, 31, 67, 118-121,  
 171, 199, 240, 289 *ff.*, 388, 392
- Narvaez, General, 22
- Nicholas, Tsar, 163
- Nigra, Chevalier, 175, 371-373
- OLLIVIER, Emile, 326, 341, 356
- Orsini, Felix, 215 *ff.*
- PACO (brother of the Empress  
 Eugénie), 12
- Palafox, 4; *and see* Montijo
- Palikao, Count, 356, 371
- Palmerston, Lord, 159, 200, 237
- Pelissier. *See* Malakoff, Duke of,  
 "Pepa" (Madame Pollet), 104
- Persigny, Count, 42, 63, 136-138,  
 223-226
- Pius IX., Pope, 80, 183, 251, 318
- RÉGNIER, 386-387
- Rochefort, Henri, 332
- Rouher, 139, 325, 333, 353
- SAINT-AMAND, Baron Imbert de,  
 71 *n.*, 196, *etc.*
- Shaw, Miss, 189
- Sibour, Monseigneur, 80
- TASCHER DE LA PAGERIE, Count  
 Louis, 63, 77, 103, 124
- Tascher de la Pagerie, Countess  
 Stéphanie, 35, 102, 144, *etc.*
- Tascher de la Pagerie, Duke  
 Charles, 77, 103, 125
- Thiers, Adolphe, 306, 366
- Thouvenel, 249, 288
- Trochu, General, 358 *ff.*, 367 *ff.*
- VICTOR EMMANUEL, King, 175,  
 240, 251, 318
- Victoria, Queen, and Napoleon's  
 suit for her niece, 52; receives  
 Napoleon and Eugénie at Wind-  
 sor, 164; her feelings towards  
 the Empress, 165, 174, 230, 403;  
 towards Napoleon, 174, 229; re-  
 ceives Napoleon and Eugénie at  
 Osborne, 199; visits Cherbourg,  
 201, 228; receives Eugénie at  
 Windsor in 1860, 265; her letters  
 after the Prince Imperial's death,  
 396
- Victoria Eugénie, Queen of Spain,  
 404
- WALEWSKI, Count, 53-5, 132 *ff.*,  
 176, 206, 209, 226, 249
- William, King of Prussia (after-  
 wards German Emperor), 315-7,  
 342
- Wood, Sir Evelyn, 394, 397 *ff.*



UC  
280.2  
54  
1109

THE LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
Santa Barbara

STACK COLLECTION

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE  
STAMPED BELOW.

FAC MAY 6 1969 A

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**AA** 000 172 971 4

