



Romances Near to Thrones

Napoleon III and Eugenie

By STERLING HELIG

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WHEN a king's love is mentioned, the mind flies to the morganatic.

In America the word has been misused for seamliness in mentioning the usual heart affairs of royalty, but it is an exact term of purely German genealogical law, and means a legal and binding marriage that does not raise an un-royal wife to royal rank.

Now, if a false morganatic marriage is the easiest thing imaginable and a true one disadvantageous but quite possible, how shall we sufficiently admire an emperor who lifts a little countess to be empress beside him? Add an unstable throne, new in itself, newly mounted, in sore need of royal alliances; add the bitter opposition of his family, the laugh of the world, the contempt of statesmen, and the estrangement of partisans; make the beloved one a foreigner completely unpopular with his people, and you will have the elements of Napoleon III's heroism in loving Eugenie.



Few kings since Cophetua have loved like this.

Among so many royal loves that lacked devotion, it shines like a star.

It begins with a gypsy at Madrid. Eugenie's mother, a widow, camarera mayor to the queen, lived in her own house in the Plaza del Angel.

One day—Eugenie being thirteen and a tomboy—they refused to take her in the Prado carriage promenade, which, with the opera, still remains the common ground where poor, proud families meet the great ones of Madrid as equals. The Countess de Montijo clung to her carriage and her opera box.

Alone, Tomboy Eugenie was sliding down the banister. She slid too strong, banged against the fly-screen front door, and fell inanimate. A gypsy woman, passing, took the girl's head in her lap and brought her to. Then she looked attentively at her and said:

"The senorita was born under the open sky, the night of a battle."

"What!" exclaimed the countess, returned with the carriage. She was struck by the truth of the words. Thirteen years ago, at Granada, an earthquake had forced them to camp a night in the garden, and Eugenie was there prematurely born.

"What will be her future?" asked the superstitious mother.

"She will be queen," said the gypsy.

The prediction was bold, and beauty only could lift the thirteen-year-old girl to its realization; but beauty had already done much for that family.

So dreamed the mother. She herself had been a really poor girl, daughter of a British subject who had failed in business in Malaga. His name was Kirkpatrick, and he had long been American vice-consul. He had married one of two beautiful sisters, yet still poorer—see how hereditary beauty will force its way, through four generations, from its unadorned self to a throne!

The first was a poor Spanish girl, Gallegros, whose sole possession was her beauty. Greignie, French wine merchant of Malaga, married her and had two lovely daughters; and two foreign consuls, French de Lesseps and Scotch Kirkpatrick, lifted them by marriage to the first rounds of the social ladder. From the de Lesseps alliance came the "grand Francis" of Suez and Panama; but Kirkpatrick's wife gave him a daughter of such rare charms that a Spanish grandee, with a place at court and of considerable family, married her for love.

He was a duke, a marquis, a viscount and a baron, but the title by which he had been known to the world was Count de Montijo. He had two daughters fairer yet than mother, grandmother or great-grandmother, and he died. Eugenie was one, her sister Pacca was the other.

On the thirteen-year-old girl the gypsy's prediction made a formative impression. Confirming it, as she grew up she saw her elder sister Pacca (Maria Francisca) make an unprecedented match even in that family. Pacca caught the rich and mighty Duke of Alva. Higher than the Duke of Alva could only be a king.

Eugenie, growing up, refused brilliant Spanish offers; first the Duke of Ossuna, then the rich and handsome young Duke of Sesto. Sesto in truth inspired her with "a certain sympathy and admiration. He was so attractive!" But it was not love. Deep in her heart she loved a dream prince, the unknown of the gypsy, endowed by her girl's fancy with a thousand charming attributes. She smiled at the absurdity of it. Where could such a prince be? Yet she held off from all other suitors.

When her mother took her to Paris her heart leaped at an unexpected premonition.

The handsome, dark-browed, careworn man, still young, who, as French president, received at the Elysee, became a romantic figure in her eyes. Eugenie wished to attend a presidential reception. Her mother hesitated. It would make them ridiculous with the mildewed smart set.

"But my father was an officer of the Great Napoleon," said Eugenie, and she had her way. The prince-president, weighed down with the



"MADemoiselle, WHICH WAY SHALL I TAKE TO GET YOU?"

dangerous and complicated details of his plot, was struck by the girl's beauty. That evening he sought her out a second time. He was touched and flattered by the romantic interest she showed in his person and his cause. The beautiful girl stuck in his mind. He felt as if he had always known her. He knew that he would meet her again.

Eugenie felt the same mysterious attraction. "Ah, would that I could help him!" She thought of the lonely prince and his risky ambitions that were being laughed about in Paris as an open secret. At the moment of the coup d'etat she fairly burned with anxiety. She dashed about the little flat like a tigress. "What can I do?" she asked herself. "What can I do to aid him?"

That night Napoleon received a letter. It was from a romantic, inexperienced girl, but ardent and sincere. It gave him her good wishes and audaciously offered him all she possessed should his projects need ready money.

After December 2 it was the Empire in fact if not in name. Napoleon gave hunts like a sovereign, at Fontainebleau and Compeigne. At these he met again the beautiful Spanish girl, fearless horsewoman, tireless dancer. He remembered above all her letter written in that dark hour of his wavering chances.

His love at first sight for Eugenie was soon noticed, showing itself full-blown in the most open attentions. The girl and her mother had continual invitations to Compeigne and the Tuilleries.

Napoleon soon found the uselessness of throwing his handkerchief at the beautiful foreigner.

Yet he felt—he knew—that she loved him passionately. It was a desperate situation for the girl, and his heart swelled with love and pride and admiration of her. Once Eugenie and her mother were bidden to a parade review at the Tuilleries. In the courtyard Napoleon drew up his horse under the windows of the first floor to salute the ladies. He wished to dismount and go up to them.

"Mademoiselle," he said, addressing Eugenie, "which way shall I take to get to you?"

"He was almost as new to the Tuilleries as any of us," told the Eugenie of eighty-three years. "He did not know his way about the palace."

"Sire," she called down to him, "you must come by the way of the chapel!" As a fact the corridor leading to the chapel was the shortest route to these rooms, but Napoleon understood her hidden meaning. Again, one afternoon at Compeigne, when the flower of the brand-new emperor's court was idling around his vingt-et-un table, she made the situation clear to him. Seated at Napoleon's right, she consulted him from time to time as to her play. She found two picture cards in her hand, counting twenty out of twenty-one possible points. "Stand on that," said the emperor, "it is very high."

"No," said Eugenie, "I must have all or nothing!"

Every morning old Jerome Bonaparte, his uncle, last surviving brother of the great Napoleon, would arrive, confidential, flattering, giggling and a-gog with bad insinuations;

he said to his weeping cousin. And she did it. Napoleon acted toward Eugenie with chivalrous loyalty. He laid before her all the disadvantages of the brilliant yet uncertain position he was offering her. He explained to her his unpopularity with the old French aristocrats, the bad will of certain great powers, the possibility of his being assassinated by some secret society of which he had become a member in his adventurous youth. There were hostilities even in the army, in his opinion the most serious danger; but he could not let them short by declaring a war.

"I would not have it otherwise," she answered. "I will take my risks beside you. So may I be worthy!"

As a queen she lacked dignity. She had not been born to the solemn self-appreciation of royalty; and she was a mixture of lightness and austerity, generosity and sense, kindness and indifference, in which the transitions were abrupt and disconcerting to French orderliness.

Alone among the sovereigns of Europe Queen Victoria had received her cordially; more, she had taken up Eugenie and imposed her on the courts of Europe. Yet even at Windsor, where the imperial couple were received with extraordinary pomp, Eugenie's insouciance threatened to play her a bad turn that would have illustrated her un-imperial attitude.

A quarter of an hour before they were to be received by Victoria and her beloved consort in the throne room, Eugenie discovered that, among the hundred trunks of the French visitors, hers alone had not arrived! The emperor was deeply mortified that the discovery should have been made so late, as showing lack of discipline and serene orderliness, and on his advice Eugenie had already begun to pretend a headache due to suppressed seasickness when one of her ladies dared to offer her a choice of gowns.

A blue dress of the simplest description seemed the only one that promised well. Great ladies and maids fell upon it deftly, and in a few minutes the blue gown was readjusted to the empress. So Eugenie—without jewels, flowers at her corsage and flowers in her hair—appeared before the British court in her own dazzling beauty. She made an immense success.

What most touched Victoria's heart, it may be told, was the pathetic and pretty way in which the young couple spontaneously confided certain doubts and fears to her as an experienced matron and mother of eight. They had been married two years, and as yet there was no heir. When the little prince-imperial was born, one lady only was permitted to be present with the doctors and the serving-women all the time. This was the Countess of Ely, Queen Victoria's intimate friend, sent over from England to help along.

As had been done for the King of Rome, it was announced in advance that should the infant be a boy, cannon would fire, not twenty-one times, but a hundred.

It happened after midnight, and the Parisians, awakening, counted the cannon-shots. When they got past twenty-one, the Parisians rolled over in their beds and yawned: "Well, she is lucky!"

The bigamous old Jerome had bitterly persecuted her as an interloper. His son, Plon-Plon, her hater and detractor by inheritance, was not persona grata with Eugenie. So Napoleon, who enjoyed smoking cigarettes with the reprobate father of the present pretender, Victor, was forced to visit him secretly. One day, some time after the marriage, he came, sat down, and said:

"Prince, does your wife make you scenes?"

"No," replied the husband of Clotilde, the daughter of Victor Emmanuel.

"There is no living with Eugenie," sighed Napoleon. "The moment I give audience with another woman I risk a violent quarrel."

"Crack her on the side of the face the next time she makes you a scene," suggested Plon-Plon.

"Don't think of it," exclaimed the emperor. "You don't know Eugenie; she would open a window of the Tuilleries and cry 'Police!'"

To the end women took advantage of this breezy independence, natural exuberance, and ineradicable unconventionality of Eugenie to lay traps for her. Hers was a continuous performance of the Lady walking amid the rout of Comus. Among others, Mme. de Metternich, wife of the Austrian ambassador, seemed to have vowed Eugenie's destruction. Once, at Fontainebleau, she almost led her into going to the races in short skirts.

"My dear Pauline," someone asked her, "would you counsel your own sovereign to get herself up in short skirts?"

"That is different," replied the Metternich, "my empress is a royal princess, a real empress, while yours, my dear, is . . . Mademoiselle de Montijo!"

Was she only Mademoiselle de Montijo? Did she not keep her word: "So may I be worthy!" to the Empire and to France?

Twenty years later, in her dealings with Bismarck after the Franco-Prussian war, Eugenie had practically concluded a treaty while refusing to concede "an inch of French territory." The Republicans, taking the deal out of her hands, agreed to the loss of Alsace and Lorraine.

"Have you got her?"

Hoary old sinner, unrepentant of his desertion, fifty years ago, of his true American wife in Baltimore, he had the court ladies in full slander of Eugenie before Napoleon had made up his mind, and he exercised a diabolical ingenuity in trying to prevent an honest marriage.

Those first ladies of the Second Empire had extraordinary manners. One evening, at Compeigne, when Eugenie was going in to dinner on the arm of Colonel de Toulougeon, a slight confusion permitted him to whisk Eugenie ahead of Madame Fortoul, wife of the minister of that name.

"How," exclaimed, audibly to her cavalier, "do you permit that—creature to push past me?"

The next morning Mlle. de Montijo, with tears in her eyes, stood on the terrace apart from the others. It was no use to attract Napoleon's sympathy, the girl saw her prince-hero disappearing in a nightmare of hateful gossip. Napoleon, who had sought her, asked the cause of her sorrow.

"I must leave Compeigne," she faltered—and told of the slights and insults to which she was subjected.

The emperor listened to the beautiful girl. Then, when she had finished, he tore a green string of ivy from a park tree, deftly twisted it into a crown, and said loudly—that all might hear—as he placed it on her head:

"Wear this one—meanwhile."

It is a twice-told anecdote, but, as it was Napoleon's proposal of marriage, I see no way to omit it. He never actually asked her hand—he took it. Not another murmur arose from the court ladies. At once they flocked around Eugenie.

It was another matter, however, for Napoleon to force his choice on the statesmen and soldiers backing his still risky empire. Opinions were divided on what royal alliance he should make. Some were for a princess of Sweden; some for a Braganza, some for the Hohenzollern. Then, suddenly, Napoleon, speaking of Eugenie, sprung the mine by saying, "There is no question but the right of hand."

"No question but the right of hand!" The words ran through his backers like an alarm of fire. One with the strongest hold upon Napoleon—De Persigny, his minister of the interior—was sent to tell him in the name of all that it would not do.

De Persigny, mixed up with Napoleon in many an adventure, had kept his old-comrade liberty of speech. He joked about Napoleon's admiration for Eugenie; surely the emperor must amuse himself. When he noticed that Napoleon's face grew stern, he rose to fighting arguments, brutally accumulating proofs and reasons why a marriage would be idiotic, both dynastically—and otherwise. He sneered at the Montijo title; brought out the grandfather, Kirkpatrick, bankrupt Malaga raisin merchant; and then he took up Eugenie's roving life, "What was the girl doing here in Paris?"

"Did you ever hear of the young Duke of Sesto?" asked De Persigny. "Did you ever hear of Merimee?"

"Merimee is a great writer," said Napoleon. "Surely—for he writes Eugenie's letters to you!" laughed De Persigny. "Mother, daughter, and newspaper man sit round the table and concoct the beautiful letters that you cherish. Really, it was not worth risking the coup d'etat to arrive at that!"

What a triumph for the aged lady to recall Napoleon's steadfast love in face of both policy and slander! It was always known why Eugenie hated De Persigny, Prince Jerome and the Princess Mathilde. She could forgive political counselors who pressed the royal princess upon Napoleon; she could not forgive the powerful ones who sought to take away her character behind her back.

Napoleon heard them all alike. He answered nothing. Foul and most of the military backers, with Edward Ney and Toulougeon for their spokesmen, warned rapidly "The Clan of the Lovers." In vain did Mathilde drag herself at Napoleon's knees, begging him to renounce a marriage that would be the ruin of them all. The emperor had decided. "You will give a great ball to announce the engagement,"

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Whenever Rev. Solon Jefferson called on Aunt Candace it was her custom to set a plate of gingerbread before him and then ply him with what she called "ligious 'spounding'."

"Wha' fo' does de Lawd send epidemics into de land?" she asked him one day.

"When folks get so bad dey must be removed, some of 'em, Sist' Candace, den de Lawd permits de coming ob an epidemic," said Mr. Jefferson, and took a large bite of gingerbread.

"Uh-h!" said Aunt Candace. "Et dat's so, how come de good people gets removed along wid de bad ones?"

"De good ones are summoned fo' witnesses," said Rev. Solon, fortified in spirit and clarified in mind by the gingerbread, although slightly embarrassed in his utterance. "De Lawd gibs every man a fair trial."—Youth's Companion.

Scared Out.

The guides had a pretty story to tell as often as they were asked why the cliffs gave back no sound.

A beautiful Echo (so the story ran) formerly dwelt in the valley, and had great fun mocking people who, chancing that way, in any manner broke the sylvan silence.

But once upon a time a party of smart women, prompted by the guides knew not what caprice, sat down in the immediate neighborhood to enjoy a game of progressive whist.

"Gee, I give it up!" cried the Echo thereupon, and in consternation fled the place, nevermore to return.—Puck.

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"I recommended Grape-Nuts and Postum to one of my friends, who was afflicted as I had been. She followed my advice and in a short time was restored to complete health and in about 8 months her weight increased from 100 to 148 pounds.

"Our doctor, observing the effect of Grape-Nuts and Postum in our cases, declared, the other day, that he would hereafter prescribe these food products for gastritis." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.