

## EUGÉNIE EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH.

## Not Born but Raised to the Purple.

When I was a child at home in a primitive, though self-sufficing little village, ever and anon gusts of fashion swept our way. A beautiful half-sister *femme du monde* alighted amongst us from time to time—straight from Paris, or Baden-Baden, or other centres *à la mode*—with trunks full of *fripserie* and *bons-bons*, which set us all in a flutter.

This Rosie was a veritable honey-pot, and we children buzzed about her sucking in all the sweetness to be extracted from the outer world of romance.

Eugénie, Empress of the French, was then the arbiter *par excellence* of style and beauty, a fairy Princess, raised by the grace of an Emperor to a pinnacle of glory only to be attained in France. An aristocrat of aristocrats in appearance, as if to the Purple born. We children were never tired of listening to her story, to reports of her marvellous beauty, of her grace. Her complexion, her cascade of golden curls, and exquisite apparel, velvets and satins, and *point de soir*; all woven on the looms of Lyons of real silk, no shoddy substitutes and make believe!

Paris on a spring day! Lilies, lilacs, violets! To wait in the Place de la Concorde, to see the Tuileries Gates swung open, and the Empress pass out and up the Champs Elysées in her magnificent gala carriage of crystal and gold, emblazoned with the family arms and eagles. The crimson hammer cloth embroidered in real gold—embossed with pearls and precious stones—herself a vision of loveliness in clouds of pale blue raiment, her gossamer bonnet poised on her golden curls. What *could* be more entrancing?

We longed for Paris.

Alas! when twenty years later I first stood in the Place de la Concorde the Palace of the Tuileries was a fire-scorched ruin, the Gates were fast closed, the Second Empire had been swept away, and Eugénie was an exile—the sacred dust of Husband and Son entombed on English soil—and forever robed in black *L'Impératrice Dolorosa* mourned the days that were no more.

Only in imagination had I visioned this imperial woman in all her glory, then one day we met face to face in a dusty little train travelling from Piræus to Athens!

I was due to luncheon at the Legation and left Piræus for the purpose. The train stopped at Phalarum, and on the platform a little group of foreigners awaited it, two veiled ladies and two sombrely dressed men. The door was opened and the four stepped into the carriage in which I was seated. The day was oppressive, and presently the lady opposite me raised her veil.

My heart thumped and fluttered on. One glance and I recognised in the grief-strained face the wreck of Imperial Eugénie.

Memories flashed back to the sixties, thirty years ago!

Rosie and her fragrance and her fripperies, the Palace of the Tuileries, the crystal coach, billows of silken garments, a vision of superb womanhood, hats upraised, cries of *vive l'Impératrice*—and now—

When we arrived at Athens I curtsied and stood aside, and received from her a regal and gratified acknowledgment.

At luncheon I imparted the news that the Empress was in Athens. To this a sprightly young diplomat took exception. "We have information" he informed me, "that the *Thistle* (the Empress's yacht) is at Naples." Upon returning to the Hotel d'Angleterre, accompanied by the diplomatic bud, we were informed that the Empress was within!

Later I learned that the King and Queen would call upon the Empress in the evening.

This they did, and from a quiet corner I saw again the sad imperial lady escort them to the door, and silently reascend the stairs and pass out of sight.

No violets, beloved of the Bonapartes, were procurable in Athens, so an exquisite

bouquet of roses—England's flower—was sent up anonymously to the apartments of the Empress Eugénie from "English nurses serving the Greek wounded," and I have no doubt they soothed a restless hour. She lived amongst us until her death, and served our sick and wounded in the Great War with the sweetest devotion.

Alexandra—Olga—Eugénie, lovely Queens greatly beloved; specially knit together in tragic sorrows, in that all were called upon to mourn the passing of Sovereign husbands, and to weep by the biers of their first-born sons, and greater sorrow than this hath no woman.

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HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY,  
EUGÉNIE, EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH.

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