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THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE  
AND HER CIRCLE



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THE EMPRESS AND THE LADIES OF HER COURT.

*By Winterhalter.*



THE  
EMPRESS EUGÉNIE  
AND HER CIRCLE

1856-65

BY

DR. E. BARTHEZ

PHYSICIAN TO THE PRINCE IMPERIAL

TRANSLATED BY BERNARD MIALL

WITH 31 ILLUSTRATIONS

BRENTANO'S  
NEW YORK

1913

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. Letter of 7 July, 1856 (Paris):	
Dr. Barthez appointed physician-in-ordinary to the Prince Imperial . . . . .	11-15
Why required . . . . .	12
A careful father . . . . .	14
II. Letter of 8 July, 1856 (Paris):	
Appearance and manner of the Empress . . . . .	16
The Prince and suite . . . . .	17
Saint-Cloud . . . . .	18
Good advice . . . . .	21
III. Letter of 9 July, 1856 (Paris):	
The <i>Nourrice</i> . . . . .	22
IV. Letter of 11 July, 1856 (Paris):	
Flattery and its results . . . . .	23
V. Letter of 14 July, 1856 (Paris):	
Childish ailments and diet . . . . .	26
VI. Letter of 23 July, 1856 (Paris):	
A masterful nurse . . . . .	28
The Prince's toilet . . . . .	29-31
Two difficult patients . . . . .	30-1
The toilet . . . . .	34-9
VII. Letter of 11 August, 1856 (Paris):	
The proposed journey: the Emperor . . . . .	40-1
Nervousness respecting epidemics . . . . .	42
VIII. Letter of 21 August, 1856 (Biarritz):	
A hasty summons . . . . .	44-5
A luxurious train . . . . .	46-7
The journey . . . . .	47-56
IX. Letter of 22-27 August, 1856 (Biarritz):	
The villa and surroundings . . . . .	57-61
The Doctor's amusements . . . . .	62-7
X. Letter of 23 August, 1856 (Biarritz):	
His Majesty upon American dentists . . . . .	69-70

# Contents

	PAGE
XI. Letter of 8 September, 1856 (Biarritz) :	
An erratic driver . . . . .	72
The Empress's charities . . . . .	75-6
XII. Letter of 5-12 September, 1856 (Biarritz) :	
A pen-portrait of Napoleon III. . . . .	78-86
An embarrassing experiment . . . . .	86-7
Evening amusements . . . . .	89-90
The Emperor's tastes . . . . .	90-1
XIII. Letter of 19 September, 1856 (Biarritz) :	
Bulls and bullfights . . . . .	93-5
XIV. Letter of 22 September, 1856 (Biarritz) :	
Drawbacks . . . . .	96-7
XV. Letter of 22-26 September, 1856 (Biarritz):	
The Emperor . . . . .	98
Character and appearance of the Empress . . . . .	99-102
The crinoline or "cage" . . . . .	102-5
Character and amusements . . . . .	105-19
XVI. Letter of 27 September, 1856 (Biarritz) :	
Another bullfight . . . . .	121
XVII. Letter of 30 September, 1856 (Biarritz) :	
A destructive tempest . . . . .	123-5
A tender heart and a lucky sheep . . . . .	126
Doctors <i>v.</i> magnetism . . . . .	127
XVIII. Letter of 22 November, 1856 (Paris) :	
The Prince unwell . . . . .	128
Difficulties of a Court physician . . . . .	129-30
XIX. Letter of 27 August, 1857 (Biarritz) :	
The doctor as Court poet . . . . .	131
XX. Letter of 31 August, 1857 (Biarritz) :	
A Sunday bullfight . . . . .	132-3
XXI. Letter of 5 September, 1857 (Biarritz) :	
Life at Court . . . . .	133-6
Mr. Home the medium . . . . .	137-9
A <i>séance</i> . . . . .	139-42
XXII. Letter of 14 September, 1857 (Biarritz) :	
The human comedy . . . . .	144-5
An excursion to Grammont . . . . .	146-8
XXIII. Letter of 18 September, 1857 (Biarritz) :	
A bad cold . . . . .	149
Portrait of a pretty woman . . . . .	151-3

# Contents

		PAGE
XXIV.	Letter of 19 September, 1857 (Biarritz):	
	A little clique . . . . .	155-6
	Another portrait . . . . .	157-8
XXV.	Letter of 24 September, 1857 (Biarritz):	
	A dance, and a dancer . . . . .	160-1
XXVI.	Letter of 24 September, 1857 (Biarritz):	
	A telegraphic muddle . . . . .	162-3
XXVII.	Letter of 25 September, 1857 (Biarritz):	
	Mr. Home detected . . . . .	164
	He takes to his bed . . . . .	165
	But concludes not to die . . . . .	166
XXVIII.	Letter of 9 September, 1858 (Biarritz):	
	Killing time . . . . .	168-70
	M. Mocquard's verses . . . . .	170-1
XXIX.	Letter of 14 September, 1858 (Biarritz):	
	A picnic . . . . .	173-4
XXX.	Letter of 22 September, 1858 (Biarritz):	
	A visit to M. Michel, the "smuggler king" . . . . .	176-80
	An Empress at play . . . . .	181
	Fontarabia . . . . .	183-6
	Verses on the <i>Pelican</i> . . . . .	186-91
XXXI.	Letter of 29 September, 1858 (Biarritz):	
	Excursion to San Sebastien . . . . .	192
	Zumaya . . . . .	194
	An odd figure: Napoleon driving . . . . .	195-6
	Loyola . . . . .	196-7
XXXII.	Letter of 20 August, 1859:	
	The Prince is fatigued . . . . .	199
	And is sent to Biarritz . . . . .	200
XXXIII.	Letter of 21 August, 1859 (Biarritz):	
	Fried pork . . . . .	202
XXXIV.	Letter of 9 September, 1859 (Biarritz):	
	A jealous child . . . . .	204-5
	But generous . . . . .	206-7
XXXV.	Letter of 17 September, 1859 (Biarritz):	
	The <i>grand monde</i> favours Biarritz . . . . .	209
XXXVI.	Letter of 20 September, 1859 (Biarritz):	
	Cap Breton . . . . .	211-12

# Contents

	PAGE
XXXVII. Letter of 21 September, 1859 (Biarritz):	
A walk with the Emperor . . . . .	214-15
XXXVIII. Letter of 24 September, 1859 (Biarritz):	
A difficult landing . . . . .	216-19
XXXIX. Letter of 2 October, 1859 (Biarritz):	
Princess Metternich . . . . .	220-1
The doctor is home-sick . . . . .	222
XL. Letter of 9 October, 1859 (Biarritz):	
The Emperor's valet . . . . .	223-4
XLI. Letter of September, 1863 (Biarritz):	
The Empress as conversationalist . . . . .	225-6
XLII. Letter of 10 September, 1863 (Biarritz):	
A brilliant conversation . . . . .	227
XLIII. Letter of 13 September, 1863 (Biarritz):	
A pleasant circle . . . . .	228-9
XLIV. Letter of 22 September, 1863 (Biarritz):	
A talk about colours . . . . .	230
XLV. Letter of 24 September, 1863 (Biarritz):	
Another portrait of the Emperor . . . . .	231-4
XLVI. Letter of 24 September, 1863 (Biarritz):	
Polish affairs . . . . .	235-6
A wilful patient . . . . .	237-9
XLVII. Letter of 29 September, 1863 (Biarritz):	
The Emperor's good works . . . . .	240-1
A good man . . . . .	241-3
XLVIII. Letter of 11 September, 1865 (Biarritz):	
The Spanish Court expected . . . . .	244-5
XLIX. Letter of 12 September, 1865 (Biarritz):	
The Queen of Spain . . . . .	246
Marshal O'Donnell . . . . .	247
L. Letter of 1 October, 1865 (Biarritz):	
The Villa Eugénie . . . . .	249-51
LI. Letter of 9 October, 1865 (Biarritz):	
Bismarck . . . . .	252
A practical joke . . . . .	252-4
Letter on the death of the Prince Imperial . . . . .	255
INDEX . . . . .	257

## ILLUSTRATIONS

THE EMPRESS AND THE LADIES OF HER COURT	<i>Frontispiece</i> FACING PAGE
DR. CONNEAU . . . . .	12
SAINT-CLOUD IN THE "FIFTIES" . . . . .	18
DR. CORVISART . . . . .	20
THE PRINCE IMPERIAL . . . . .	26
CRADLE OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL . . . . .	30
VIEW OF BIARRITZ AND THE VILLA EUGÉNIE . . . . .	56
THE VILLA EUGÉNIE IN 1856 . . . . .	58
DR. BARTHEZ . . . . .	66
THE EMPRESS AT BIARRITZ . . . . .	74
THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON III. . . . .	80
THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON III. . . . .	98
THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . .	100
	9

# Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
PRINCE NAPOLEON AND THE PRINCESS CLOTILDE .	145
J. F. C. MOCQUARD . . . . .	170
NEY, PRINCE DE LA MOSKOWA . . . . .	182
VILLA INHABITED BY THE PRINCE IMPERIAL AT BAGNÈRES DE LUCHON . . . . .	198
THE PRINCE IMPERIAL . . . . .	200
DRAWING BY THE PRINCE IMPERIAL, 1862 .	206
ACHILLE FOULD . . . . .	217
THE EMPRESS PRESIDING AT A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS . . . . .	226
SIR ANTHONY PANIZZI . . . . .	229
PROSPER MÉRIMÉE . . . . .	230
COUNTESS DE MONTIJO . . . . .	232
THE PRINCE IMPERIAL . . . . .	234
THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . .	238
THE EMPEROR AND THE PRINCE IMPERIAL .	240
ISABELLA II., QUEEN OF SPAIN . . . . .	244
MARSHAL O'DONNELL, DUKE OF TETUAN . .	246
PRINCE BISMARCK . . . . .	252
DR. BARTHEZ . . . . .	254



# The Empress Eugénie and her Circle

## I

7 July, 1856

I HAD abandoned the idea of obtaining the eminent post of physician to the Prince Imperial, and I was, as you know, considerably consoled when I received a visit, on the 2nd of this month, from Corvisart, who came to inform me, on M. Conneau's<sup>1</sup> behalf, that I could be nominated for the post provided I would consent to travel with the Prince. On my replying in the affirmative, it was arranged that I should meet M. Conneau on the following day, in order to discuss matters of business.

<sup>1</sup> Chief physician to the Emperor.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Here is a summary of the details which my two colleagues gave me :—

The Emperor, having to leave for Plombières, entrusted M. Conneau with the care of the health of the Prince Imperial during his absence, and M. Conneau was anxious, that being so, to call in a suitable physician. He explained to the Emperor that while His Majesty was on the spot he would call in the doctor chosen by him ; but in the Emperor's absence he could not accept the responsibility of the Prince's welfare unless he was supported by a colleague in whom he had confidence.

This was agreed to by His Majesty, but it was just then arranged that the Empress was to go to Biarritz for her health, so that the three members of the Imperial family would all be widely separated. The Empress could not make up her mind to accept this separation, and only consented to make the journey on the condition of being accompanied by the Prince. Thereupon a dispute arose between Conneau, who



H. CONNEAU,  
Médecin du prince NAPOLEON-LOUIS.

*Recue le 20 Mars, 1846, rue de la Chaussée-l'Écluse, 26.*

DR. CONNEAU.

To face p. 12.



## Preliminary Arrangements

saw no reason why the Prince should not make the journey, and the rest of His Majesty's physicians, who considered that it would be imprudent to move the child.

It was impossible to come to an agreement before the Emperor's departure for Plombières, and I believe the matter is not yet entirely decided. At the moment of departure the Emperor told Conneau that since a physician accustomed to children was required, above all in the event of a journey, he authorised him to speak of the matter to the Empress, and to propose that I should be selected for the post.

To these details Conneau added a few others, relating to the Prince's health.

He is a fine, strong child, feeding well ; a little pale, as he was too much confined indoors at first, at the time of his stay in Paris. The Emperor wished him to take the air on the terrace by the waterside ; there, he said, the King of Rome and the children of Louis Philippe had been exercised, and had flourished. The physician rightly

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

feared, for so young a child, the breezes which swept the terrace from all points of the compass, so that even the keepers of the garden complained of them. Conneau advised the courtyard of the Tuileries, in front of the Carrousel, as the best locality, sheltered from the north and without draughts.

To this the Emperor would never give his consent. He was right, for there are little whirlwinds there directly the wind blows; and the proximity of the public was another objection. The result was that the Prince was habitually kept indoors.<sup>1</sup>

For the rest, the child was going on very well; in the early stages of teething, dribbling, and babbling.

Two days later I received an invitation to present myself at Saint-Cloud at about two o'clock.

The carriage delayed me a quarter of an hour. I was to have the honour of being

<sup>1</sup> We have since had proof that the rooms were far from being healthy or sufficiently ventilated.

## Introduction

presented to His Majesty, and it was very annoying to be unpunctual at this first presentation.

I saw the Empress, whom I found greatly changed since the day of the inauguration of the Hospital of Sainte-Eugénie.

## II

8 July, 1856

I TOLD you in my letter of yesterday, my dear Octavie, that I had found the Empress greatly changed. The first time I saw her in 1854 I should have said she was twenty-four to twenty-five years old; to-day she looked a good thirty-five. Her painful confinement and the long recovery therefrom have faded, coarsened, and yellowed the skin of her face, which I had thought so fine, transparent, and youthful.

She was gracious in her manner, without the coldness only natural to her exalted position and to a first interview. She spoke of the strength and beauty of her child, of his sweetness, his tranquillity, proofs of the absence of any pain. She asked me to



## The Infant Prince

examine certain little pimples on his arms and his face.

Directly after this interview Conneau took me to see the Prince, who was sleeping as soundly as possible after sitting to a painter (a surprise which the Empress has in store for her noble spouse). The Prince was sleeping very quietly, his little dimpled hands prettily resting in the manner peculiar to very young children. We have often admired this in our own dear baby, as you will remember. The Prince has a fat, strongly-marked face, full cheeks, rather pale, and perhaps a trifle flabby. He is like all milk-fed children : his colour is of a dull white ; he is fat, and a little flatulent, but not excessively so. I should have liked to see his eyes, but he held them obstinately closed ; he was sleeping so soundly !

After a few words, not very intelligible, with the nurse, a young Englishwoman who doesn't speak a word of French, and a few more words with Mme. de Brancion, the under-governess, I arranged to see the

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Prince three times a week, about midday, and on this I withdrew.

. . . . .

Yesterday, the 7th of July, I returned to Saint-Cloud a little before noon. I found the Prince taking his airing in the park. How delighted you would have been, dear wife, to have seen this lovely place! What delicious promenades! From the front of the château one overlooks the Seine, which just there is green and full of variety; it is a magnificent panorama, and the air is pure and pleasant. Behind, in the park, are the most charming walks, continually ascending and descending, between the most beautiful and skilfully planted trees, with here and there sudden glimpses of flower-beds and basins. The Prince being concealed somewhere in the midst of this maze, I set out in search of him, grateful for the balmy air and the freshness that tempered the heat of the day.

However, it struck me afterwards that this



ST. CLOUD IN THE "FIFTIES."



## The Infant Prince

charming place was too shady for the habitual exercise of a child ; there was too much moisture and too little air ; I must take care to obtain exact information as to the Prince's habits, in order to modify such as do not seem desirable. When fortune allows all that can be desired every care must be taken of the health of so precious a child, and one must be checked only by the inflexible will of the parents.

I soon found the Prince, lying in the arms of his English nurse, and accompanied by a second woman, who was there in place of Mme. de Brancion, then at lunch. This woman knew no English, and knew nothing of the habits of the Prince, so, anxious to profit by the absence of any person of rank to speak with the Englishwoman, I summoned all the English words at my disposal, and learned the following facts :—

The Prince is fed exclusively on the milk of his wet-nurse. He sucks every two hours in the day and about three times during the night. (It seems that the wet-nurse is not

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

habitually with him, for I have not yet seen her ; this is a good plan when one wishes to train a child to regularity.)

. . . . .

In the open air the Prince looked to me firmer and of a better colour than in his bed.

The skin of his little arms was strongly mottled. He has large eyes, of a deep blue, limpid and transparent ; they looked at me at first with astonishment ; but he soon began to smile when I tried to attract his attention. I felt like hugging him ; you know how I love children, and he reminded me of our dear Ernest, although his features are much more distinguished than those of our great bumpkin.

On withdrawing I kissed his hand and went off to chat with Corvisart.<sup>1</sup> . . . I learned that the Prince is out of doors a good part of the day ; and that except when driving he is always under these great trees, even so late as half-past six in the evening.

<sup>1</sup> Second physician to the Emperor.



DR. CORVISART.





## Not a Courtier

When I was leaving him, Corvisart said—

“ If the Empress questions you or asks your advice concerning the Prince, always give a very clear and decided opinion. Don't be afraid of giving it, even if it is contrary to Her Majesty's opinion. Leave her free to do as she likes, but see that your advice is clearly expressed. Her Majesty is imprudent in matters that concern herself and the Emperor, and even the Prince.”

Corvisart was right, for if I gave way to Her Majesty's wishes the responsibility would not be fairly shared. I must deprecate anything that seems imprudent. I feel this as a matter of conscience ; if it is not politic, so much the worse for me. I shall follow Corvisart's advice, even if I suffer for it sometimes. I should never make a courtier, nor modify well-meant advice in order to flatter.

### III

9 July, 1856

. . . I HAVE seen the wet-nurse ; she is a tall, strong woman, with a good figure, which she holds well ; deliciously though simply dressed, she looks quite the fine lady. A good nurse, although she is not young. She looks forty, and must be thirty-five at least. She nursed Guéneau de Mussy's second child.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Physician to the Orléans family.

#### IV

11 July, 1856

. . . TO-DAY the Prince has a much better colour ; his face is more rosy and his eye more lively.

He is a cheerful child, and laughs readily at those he knows. But Mme. de Brancion tells me Rayer recommended that the Prince should not be encouraged to play too much on account of the very precocious development of his intelligence (he is hardly four months old !), and that the excitement might be harmful to him. Flatterer ! how well you know how to treat these people ! The result of this stupid flattery is that they scarcely dare to play with the Prince or give him a bit of a shake—so much so that these last few days, seeing him so quiet, I was afraid he might be deaf, and made a serious

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

test to assure myself that his hearing was good.

To-day I saw clearly that Conneau does not hold with this nonsense, and that the Prince is far more cheerful and contented with him than with the others. How can people sacrifice the truth and the welfare of the Prince in this way for the sake of flattery? For R— is not really so foolish as to confound intelligence with excitability and nervousness. One may play to one's heart's content with the most intelligent child when he is as quiet and pacific as the Prince. Later on, perhaps, it may be necessary to see that he does not work his brain too assiduously. But as for playing with him, making him laugh, jumping him up and down—come, come! It would be quite another matter if the child were very nervous, very excitable, and felt everything keenly and with extreme animation; that is, if such momentary excitement were to go so far as to make him feverish. Then there would be a reason for going gently.

## A Dull Life

I would rather believe that R— was misunderstood than attribute such nonsense to him.

I have asked Conneau if the journey has been decided on. He tells me it is highly probable, but that he is not certain. I would just as soon they did not consult me. I have spoken of the inconvenience of a journey<sup>1</sup> in the heat of the day in this weather; my pains were wasted, as my advice went for nothing.

<sup>1</sup> The journey to Biarritz.

V

14 July, 1856

EVERY time I see the Prince he seems to have gained. I find more colour in his cheek, more animation; he grows, so to speak, under one's eye. It is evident that the air of Saint-Cloud agrees with him. Why change it?

The Prince is always constipated. . . . I do not much like this constipation; it is contrary to the nature of a plump, moist child, if I may use such an expression. It is difficult to overcome; I have not yet dared to ask if it is hereditary. For the moment I have confined myself to inquiring into the diet of the wet-nurse, in order to see if we cannot, by modifying it, influence the Prince's constipation. This diet consists of a sufficient mixture of meats and

26



THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.  
*By Winterhaller.*





## Diet

vegetables ; a bottle of wine a day, which is perhaps a little too much. I have asked that the proportion of fruits and vegetables shall be slightly increased ; and that a little barley-water shall be mixed with the wine at meal-times.

## VI

23 July, 1856

. . . I DO not like to accustom children to drugs. By habit the body loses its sensibility to remedies, and when it becomes necessary to make it obedient, one has to strike heavy blows, which are not always without unpleasant consequences. I much prefer to preserve this impressionability, which allows us to move in the desired direction by means of a slight effort.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was precisely contrary to the wishes of Miss Shaw, who, imbued with the prejudices of English nurses, drugged the Prince continually and said nothing about it. I was told, in this connection, a host of things which I could not take into account for want of proof. It will readily be understood that this young nurse, whose character was extremely authoritative, and who enjoyed the confidence of the Empress, wanted to be the mistress; that the wet-nurse was jealous of her, and that the under-governesses took

## A Masterful Nurse

I brought my visit to a close (to-day) by expressing a desire to be present at the Prince's toilet. It will be worth while, as I may perhaps learn something, or be able to suggest a few modifications if there should seem occasion. He has two toilets a day, with a bath morning and evening. . . .

their duties very seriously, wishing to direct everything, while in reality they were expected only to exercise a general supervision. Hence, necessarily, disputes and insinuations which I had not the right to regard as the truth. Amid all these disputes Miss Shaw was always the mistress, and usually for the Prince's good. Very often she was only satisfying her English prejudices, in a way that did not seem to me dangerous, though it was certainly very useless. I still remember how for years her prejudices were the despair of the Prince, forcing him, to cool his blood, so she said, to eat spinach, which he detested, having been so long stuffed with it. But the dear child loved his nurse so devotedly that he always gave way in order to please her. From this state of things it resulted that I was not really the master in the matter of his diet, the nature of which was very largely concealed from me ; moreover, despite all my efforts to avoid conflict with this power, I suffered later on the penalty of my dislike of drugs.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

On July 21, at six o'clock, I entered the Prince's apartments to see this toilet. He was still taking the air. Conneau told me the constipation persisted, and suggested syrup of manna. . . . Then the conversation became more general, and among other things which Conneau told me I remember these:—

The Empress, who is said to be *enceinte*, is not so. If it should happen she wishes to be chloroformed. She may even force Jobert to do it without cause, simply to discover whether she can be. She has not yet recovered from her accouchement. . . .

It is very difficult to take any care of her; it is the same with the Emperor. The latter thinks there is an immediate remedy for every kind of suffering. He bears the resulting pain with patience and a genuine stoicism. He gets into the saddle with blisters recently applied to his calves and thighs; he induces pustulous eruptions on the back; I believe that he even applies moxas, all without any fuss, without any of



CRADLE OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.  
*Given by the Empress to the city of Paris.*



## The Imperial Pair

those about him suspecting his sufferings. But it is quite another matter with spontaneous suffering. He is subject to neuralgia, especially cutaneous, which throws him into a state of impatience impossible to describe. He reproaches his physicians for the failure of their remedies, and believes in the first quack he comes across. Somnambulism, magnetism, homœopathy: he accepts them all; even table-turning!

Shortly afterwards Mme. Bruat arrived, wife of the Admiral, and governess of the royal children, with Mme. Bizot, an under-governess. Very soon the Prince was brought in from his outing, fresh, rosy, and healthy-looking. Always calm, good, and sweet-tempered, neither crying nor screaming; laughing sometimes, with Conneau more especially, and then turning to me to inspect me with a coolness that is . . . quite imperial!

When all is said, I am not at all surprised at this quiet and serious manner. It may be a result of the Prince's temperament, but

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

it must be increased by his habitual environment. There is never any familiarity in his presence ; all those he sees are in full dress, all are quiet in their manner, and notice no one but himself. He is the point of departure and the goal ; the prime centre of a calm, regular, monotonous movement. He lives in spacious apartments, and is carried, for his airings, under lofty trees, or along a wide terrace with a distant view. He knows nothing of the laughter, the jumping, the change of expression, the tears, the angers, and the delights, which vary life when a number of children are together ; all matters that the very youngest babies regard with such interest and curiosity, and through which they become animated and develop themselves ; which they understand and remember, from which they form conceptions and begin to learn far sooner than is thought. The environment in which a child lives acts upon him as soon as his eyes can see and distinguish, as soon as his ears can hear. While sucking, he curiously



## The Infant Prince

examines the face of the being who gives him that pleasant food. If he sees smiling eyes, watchful of his comfort and convenience, he very soon smiles. If it is still the same face that he sees, laughing and speaking, talking to him, while the hand he knows washes him and removes the things that irk and fidget him, he grows accustomed to it all the more quickly, becomes attached to it, and makes all the more rapid progress.

Here the child is brought to the wet-nurse, who gives him the breast every two or three hours, seriously and methodically, aping the fine lady; then the Prince is removed. The wet-nurse is a bottle, no more. She gives the food of the body, but for the food of the mind the child must look elsewhere. And I have never seen the Prince examine the face of his *nourrice* while he sucks; he always looks elsewhere.

I blame no one; I merely relate what I see, and add that this, to my mind, is why at four months old the Prince Imperial is

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

already so cold, so quiet, so impassive ; why he laughs only at those who laugh at him : Conneau and his nurse. Is this an advantage or otherwise? I do not judge ; perhaps I should say yes, for here is the beginning of the education which a prince has to receive. But this is not in my province, and to discuss it would call for a serious essay, not a hastily written letter.

We went in to watch his toilet : the Prince facing the light on the knees of his English nurse, and we in a half-circle round him. I got as near to him as I could ; there was only the bath between us. At this moment the Empress came in, wearing a floating robe of garnet colour or thereabouts, with a number of cross-bands of green and yellow, and an ample crinoline. . . . She joined our circle, and made every one sit ; I found myself next to her, touching her dress.

The Prince was undressed and placed entirely naked on the knees of the Englishwoman, who did everything with remark-

## A Solemn Toilet

able skill and rapidity. I was able to admire the Prince's body; it is plump, dimpled, firm, well-made, a mottled rose, and healthy enough to please any one; in short, a delightful baby, fine, strong, and of a good constitution.

With a piece of fine linen, forming a soft soapy pad, the Englishwoman gently rubbed the whole surface of the body, the head, neck, and arms—all, in short, except the face. After this general friction, gentle but thorough, the Prince was plunged into the bath and there rubbed with a soft sponge; at the end of two or three minutes he was taken out and wrapped in a flannel dressing-jacket; the head was dried first, and then covered with a nightcap, and the face washed with a fine sponge. The Prince has the same taste as Ernest; he opens his mouth and tries to get the sponge on his tongue. His body having been dried, first with flannel and then with a fine linen, he was dabbed several times over with scented powder, all over the body, from his head to his feet,

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

and for a few moments he was gently rubbed with the hand. This done, the Prince was dressed and put to his nurse's breast.

All this time the conversation was almost continuous, and its subject was almost always the Prince; at all events I shall only refer to that part of it. It was remarked that the Prince allowed this long and tedious toilet to be concluded without crying or exhibiting the slightest impatience; on the contrary, he appeared highly satisfied, playing with the forearm of his English nurse. It must be admitted that all was done with a skill and an ease which were a pleasure to watch. He only gave a few little cries when his outer clothes were being put on, and then he was apparently hungry. The toilet seemed to me sensible and skilfully effected. There is nothing I wish to alter.

The Empress asked me if the Prince ought not very soon to give up his long clothes for "shorts." I replied that he might well be left as he is for the whole of

## A Mother's Anxieties

the coming winter ; for I do not see that anything is to be gained by putting short clothes on a child that is constantly carried in the arms. The long clothes, in which the legs are so comfortable and so well protected, are excellently adapted for the winter ; but Her Majesty does not take that into account. She is impatient ; she does not notice the progress that is made ; she finds it too slow ; she would like to see the Prince more advanced : at four months she would have him a child of ten months ; yet he is really well forward, and one could not wish for anything better.

She worries herself, too, about the most futile things. His hand is too hot, or his head is too big, or too hot ; he makes no progress ; his movements are undecided ; he makes all sorts of zigzags before arriving at the object he wants to take hold of. In short, she is a mother with her first child, and has to serve her apprenticeship.

. . . . .

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Conneau seems to be very much attached to the Emperor, and to admire him greatly, and to want others to admire him, which is just as it should be ; he does not seem to be so enthusiastic about the Empress. Twice I have remarked to him that she was extremely gracious, and on both occasions he made no reply ; I even thought I detected a sort of internal grimace, as much as to say that he thought otherwise. But this may not be so in reality, and it is not my duty to look into matters that in no way affect the health of the Prince.

After dinner we had another long talk about the Emperor, and about a letter which he had just written to the Minister<sup>1</sup> in respect of the floods, the invention of floating batteries, and the influence they may have exerted on the decision of the Emperor Alexander in favour of peace,<sup>2</sup> as he may have feared that Kronstadt would not be

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor was then at Plombières.

<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Paris, which terminated the Crimean War.

## War Talk

able to resist this means of destruction. And, indeed, when one reflects that at Kimburn one of these batteries received sixty projectiles, which in no way damaged it, and killed only one man, one understands that as things are now a stone fort could not offer a sufficient resistance or defence.

I left well content with my afternoon and evening. Conneau was very agreeable to me, as well as perfectly simple and natural ; for that matter, I think he is so in his inner life. I learned that the Emperor will very soon return, and that I shall be warned in time as to whether the journey to Biarritz will take place or not. And Conneau was careful to tell me that this uncertainty does not arise because the Emperor might change his mind, but simply because he does not declare it.

## VII

11 August, 1856

AFTER my visit to the Prince, the Emperor, who had just arrived, sent for me. He was with the Empress ; I went in with Conneau. The Emperor was gracious and smiling. He chatted for a minute standing, then sat down. We spoke of the health of the Prince, the means of keeping his bowels open, the objections to a stay in the South, the dangers of travel, and the sanitary condition of Paris and Biarritz. On the whole I sought to reassure their Majesties as to the health of the Prince and the dangers of the journey ; and, indeed, I hope that with a few precautions there will be no ill results.

The Emperor and Conneau spoke very little. The Empress and I were responsible for most of the conversation. This was as



## Their Majesties

it should be; one was a woman and a mother and the other was there to make himself heard.

The Emperor seemed to me stouter, older, and serious, even sad.

I myself was sensible of a somewhat painful impression when I entered this vast *salon*, in the middle of which their Majesties showed as two melancholy and isolated specks. It seemed to me there was a lack of life; great rooms too big for two persons alone; the groom of the chamber dismissed, the etiquette more or less severe, no equality, no familiarity—it is enough to kill one with boredom. We are often overcrowded in our little room when we are all there, and can hardly hear ourselves speak, but at least there is life there; that is, animation, laughter, tears, variety, activity. . . . No, nothing is so charming as my own dear home.

I returned to Paris with Conneau. He has made me promise (a cruel and rather ridiculous thing) to allow them to replace me at

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

the hospital whenever there is an epidemic. What am I to understand by that? Is it an epidemic every time a certain number of scarlet fever cases appear simultaneously, as happens two or three times a year, every time we have a few cases of mumps, or whenever typhoid fever invades some of the wards? If this is what is meant, it would be just as well to suggest, as was done some few months ago, that I should leave the hospital. To be replaced when there are patients for me! In spring, in autumn, and in winter! To be replaced when the Court goes to the sea! When, at this rate, should I be able to attend? This is cowardice, or rather legitimate dread founded on ignorance of the facts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No doubt I made too much of this request of Conneau's, which was made, I believe, by the Emperor. His Majesty's fear was very natural, and I have often felt it since in respect of my private patients, having seen contagious diseases conveyed in such a manner. I am sure physicians cannot take too great precautions against becoming agents of infection. However, His

## Professional Difficulties

Majesty's wish remained a dead letter ; I was never required to give up my hospital duties, and the few precautions I was careful to take were sufficient ; I never carried any malady to my dear little Prince. In the matter of contagious maladies, he suffered only from scarlet fever, and the means by which it entered the château was perfectly established at the time.

## VIII

BIARRITZ, 21 *August*, 1856

I ARRIVED in Paris with the firm intention of going to bed and completing my night by three hours' sound sleep. So I got into bed, and to help myself to sleep I opened and read some letters. The last of these, in an unknown hand, was signed " la Grange " (squire-in-waiting to His Majesty), and informed me that at eight o'clock the following day my luggage would be sent for, that the Imperial convoy would set out at six in the evening, and that my valet might travel with me and take with him the few things necessary for use on the journey. On reading this I jumped to my feet, all desire to sleep having vanished. None of my things were ready, and as for a valet, good God !

## Is a Valet Necessary ?

—I do not know what such a thing is ! Must I engage one at once or could I dispense with one ? In short, I made haste, having thrown on a few clothes—for the suddenness of the thing had prevented my realising that I was more or less *in puris naturalibus*—I made haste, I say, to commence my preparations for the journey.

I then set out for Saint-Cloud, to question Conneau concerning this nightmare of a valet. Not expecting to see the Prince, I had dressed as simply as possible—old coat, old trousers, old shoes. Conneau told me that it is not necessary to have a valet ; for the rest, he would introduce me to the Marquis de la Grange, with whom I could talk matters over. He then preceded me and took me up into the State apartments, where I suddenly found myself amidst a numerous company, and while I was discussing matters an old general officer (Rolin), who seemed to be the chief personage present, invited me to breakfast, and next moment I was in a magnificent

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

dining-hall, adorned by some of the most beautiful pieces of furniture from the Exhibition, and I was seated between Conneau and the Duchesse de Bassano. All this happened so quickly that I had no time to reflect what a sorry figure I must have cut in my old clothes in that company; at the same time I learned that in my new position I must always be ready, and under arms.

I withdrew with a promise that I should be given a servant to wait on me. To-day I understand the full value of a valet. In a small house where there are few people and in which each has his or her work, I am badly looked after, and I do not suppose it would cost me any more to have a modest domestic transported, lodged, and fed at His Majesty's expense.

Finally, at half-past five, I reached the station, where I admired the Imperial train in which I was to travel. I can assure you, my dear Octavie, it is a fine sight, and well arranged; the whole consists of eight cars, the two first being intended for the luggage

## The Imperial Train

and the servants; then follow five of the biggest and tallest cars I have ever seen, each forming a great saloon, and communicating with the others by means of a door and a hanging gangway suspended above the couplings. The first of these, furnished with sofas, chairs, armchairs, tables, and a long folding table, serves as the dining-room. In a small compartment in the front of the car is the pantry, and on the other side the lavatory. Once the table is folded away the dining-room becomes a drawing-room for the use of the ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting. Next comes a saloon open on all sides, intended for smokers; then a car for their Majesties' private *salon*. Finally their Majesties' bedroom, then that of the Prince and his women, with partitions suited to everybody's comfort.

Directly the train had started the Empress retired to her *salon* with her ladies, and the Emperor remained for some time with us; we were the Comte Tascher de le Pagerie, General E. Ney, the Marquis de la Grange,

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

the Marquis de Cadore, M. de Richemont, one of the directors of the railway, and your father, my big Sophie.<sup>1</sup> While chatting, I studied the equipment of the two cars which were set apart for us. Our *salon*, with windows of the finest plate glass, and elsewhere upholstered in stamped leather, brown and green, relieved by arabesques in gold, carpeted, and lit by four lamps, is really a charming apartment; hardly convenient, however, to pass the night in. But, my little Christine, as I have promised not to complain any more I will not insist on this insignificant detail.

Our smoking-room, all of iron, is enclosed by a balustrade, at a comfortable height to lean upon, of openwork, representing leaves and interlacing branches. The roof is supported by eight rods of iron, bright and worked with ornament; it is adorned with paintings and various decorations. Chairs, campstools, and settees are there in suffi-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Barthez had one son, Ernest, and two daughters, Sophie and Christine.



## The Journey to Biarritz

cient numbers, and great curtains of thick tapestry close the four sides at will. . . . The locomotive whistles ; we are travelling at fifty miles an hour, a very pretty speed, which is maintained with perfect regularity as far as Bordeaux. The train was admirably driven, avoiding all shocks and sudden stoppages, with all the skill needful to avoid compromising the security of our country by an accident. For to risk the lives of the three members of the Imperial family was to risk everything at once. It is said that the Ministers were none too pleased at the idea of this journey.

Towards seven o'clock the table was laid, and the Empress and her ladies came into our car ; they were Mesdames de Lourmel, de la Bédoyère, and de Brancion. We sat at table—a little crowded, it must be owned ; the table, being too narrow, did not reach the divans, and being too short, we could not all sit at it very conveniently ; however, we squeezed up, and finally managed to find room. The Emperor was at one corner—a

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

very small corner!—with a sharp angle sticking into his stomach ; he had only just room for his plate ; I say plate out of habit, but it was really a silver dish. Beside the Emperor were the Empress, M. de Riche-  
mont, myself, and M. de Cadore. Opposite the Emperor were Madame de Lourmel, M. de la Grange, Madame de la Bédoyère, General Ney, Madame de Brancion, and M. Tascher, the latter occupying one end.

Cold game was served, partridges, ham, cheese, fruits, and excellent wine.

The conversation was gay, simple, unrestrained, and full of laughter. The Empress spoke a great deal, and we laughed heartily at one another's sallies. It would have been impossible to put people more at their ease. We had the appearance of wealthy, uncere-  
monious folk giving themselves the pleasure of a travelling party. Their Majesties are very kind, cheerful, and merry, the Empress with the more vivacity and “go,” the Emperor calmer. He speaks often enough, laughs often, and what he says is just and

## The Emperor

sound. His words always bear the stamp that may be observed in everything said by a man who sees clearly and is well informed. His conversation, without being abundant, is agreeable, instructive even, and often witty. When we were passing the tower of Montlhéry he was presented with an engraving representing the countryside, and in this connection he quoted for us the exact words of an old historian on the subject of the battle of Montlhéry. I often regret that I cannot recollect the more striking phrases and quips that I had the pleasure of hearing.

After the meal the Empress retired, the Emperor remaining with us some time longer, smoking a few cigarettes and inviting us to smoke. I did as the others. I smoked right under His Majesty's nose, which was hardly polite, but His Majesty was good enough to put up with it.

As the evening drew on, each made his preparations for the night, and hats were quickly changed for caps. I put on the soft

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

felt which I bought on the recommendation of my dear little wife, and I assure you I was the best capped man of the company. Then we settled for the night, some playing, others sleeping. Very soon we were all asleep, each adopting a more or less picturesque attitude and commencing to snore.

Towards three in the morning I awoke, hearing a slight noise, and through one of the windows of the *salon* I saw a laughing face which had all the appearance of making game of us. It was the Empress, who came to surprise us, and who laughed with all her might at our fashion of sleeping. Very soon we were all on our feet, and Her Majesty retired, telling us that reprisals were not permitted.

At Bordeaux, which we had to cross in order to change from one railway to another, we stopped to take a cup of coffee. The table was too small; nearly everybody was seated at it: there was no room left for me, so I decided to go out, grumbling a little at my stomach, which was calling for

## The Journey to Biarritz

food a little more loudly than was comfortable, when the Empress, perceiving my retreat, very graciously called me and had room made for me. This attentiveness and graciousness are continual in private life, stiffness being absolutely banished.

Having crossed the city in open carriages, we took the Southern Railway and were soon crossing the Landes. What a country! You have to see it to form any idea of these immense uncultivated plains, which stretch farther than the eye can see. For several hours of our journey I saw nothing but a flat country varied by thickets of briar,<sup>1</sup> and now and then by a forest of pines on the horizon. Not a village, not a house; occasionally a wretched cabin; and the only inhabitants a few rare shepherds perched on their long stilts. I asked myself if these were not the vast primitive prairies of

<sup>1</sup> This briar has nothing in common with the English briar, but is a giant heath with a whitish flower, the underground roots of which are used for the famous pipes.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

America and whether I should not presently see the last of the Mohicans.

At last we reached Bayonne, where we were received by the military and civil authorities, and where we got into carriages for the journey to Biarritz.

We had to traverse the city ; it is charming, beautified as it is by the confluence of the Adour and the Nive, and by delicious glimpses of landscape. All the inhabitants were out of doors, and a genuine enthusiasm broke out at every moment of our passage.

Imagine, Christine, your father driving through the midst of all these people in a four-horse carriage, driven by two postilions gilded at every seam, with pigtails and powdered hair, all followed by a squadron of cavalry ! Don't you feel proud ? Well, dear girl, don't feel too proud. All that doesn't make me a scrap more valuable, and it certainly won't take me to heaven. And then none of this magnificence belongs to me ; and it may all vanish like a golden dream ! Such a little thing would be enough

## Arrival at Biarritz

to destroy it! A mistake of some sort on my part, and already I have made a good many; and then there are compensations of which your young head knows nothing. If you knew how often already I have told myself that I prefer my own modest home to all the luxury that surrounds me—ah, my dear daughters, don't let vanity enter your hearts in thinking of the position I have been given. Shall I be any better for it before God? Alas, no! Shall I be happier because of it? Certainly not. Ask God that I may be and remain an honest man and good Christian: and then accept good fortune without pride and with simplicity; receive bad fortune without regret and with resignation. Let us follow the path such as God has made it for us. To better our lot upon earth is a duty, but do not let us lose sight of the fact that well-doing is a far more imperative duty. . . .

Well, we drove along the road from Bayonne to Biarritz in a big carriage, under a sun which shot his most fiery rays at us

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

point-blank. I was beside Madame de Lourmel, the widow of a general much loved by the Emperor, who, so I read in the papers the other day, very foolishly sacrificed his life in an attack which he led against Sebastopol. I say foolishly because he rushed forward with a courage as useless as it was heroic and sublime against a point quite impregnable to attack.

At last we reached Biarritz: a bare country, without trees, without green leaves; but that is only the dark side of the picture. It is not a flat country like your hideous Langrune. . . . (I call it hideous on account of the landscape, not on account of those who live there, who beautify it in my eyes and give it all the charms of the most beautiful country in the world.) Biarritz is broken up in the most picturesque manner: cliffs, detached rocks standing in the sea, the city built in an amphitheatre, and the château placed in a delightful situation giving the most agreeable view of every part.





VIEW OF BIARRITZ AND THE VILLA EUGÉNIE.



## IX

*22-27 August, 1856*

I BROKE off my tale, my dearly loved wife, at the moment of our arrival at the Villa Eugénie, as they call the château of Biarrits (or Biarritz, for one and both forms is or are used).

Lunch was fixed for noon; I had only just time to dress. I hurried and was ready well before the hour. I profited thereby to write to you and announce our happy arrival. I was joking a little to the effect that I must not keep His Majesty waiting, and was sealing my letter, extremely pleased at having finished it before lunch, and was loafing about until I should be called, when suddenly in came a servant: "Monsieur le Docteur, His Majesty is at table!" A thunderclap! Just what I had wished to

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

avoid had happened. I had the shame of passing in front of their Majesties and the misfortune to sit down—after the first course had been commenced. There, my dear Octavie, you see what my desire to reassure you has cost me ; judge by that of my guilt.

The Villa Eugénie is a little château, a mere chocolate-box, built of brick and stone, with one story above ground floor ; it is set on a little promontory, a short distance from the town. This promontory juts out a little way into the creek which runs northward of Biarritz, which is called “The Madmen’s Beach.” When the sea is up it beats on the terrace wall of the château, and even runs up a little way on either side, so as to turn the terrace into a sort of peninsula. In front of the château you look westward, over the open sea ; to the left is the south, with the promontory on which the town is built ; to the right the north, where jagged cliffs rise in a semicircle, and at the end of the promontory is a light-

58



THE VILLA EUGÉNIE IN 1856.



## The Villa Eugénie

house. From the east side the view is still extensive, but is shut in by hills, houses, and some gardens in the distance.

. . . . .

My room is oblong, neither lofty nor long nor wide ; but, on the other hand, it is very high up. It is covered from top to bottom with an imitation *perse* paper with a light green ground, ornamented with immense bouquets of flowers of all colours ; the borders are emphasised by strips of mahogany. The window curtains and bed-hangings, the counterpane and the upholstery of the room are all of *perse*, of the same design as the paper. The furniture is of mahogany, simple but handsome enough. Everything is new, like the rest of the villa, which is inhabited for the first time. On entering the room the wardrobe is to the left of the door ; then the fireplace, in white marble, of a Louis XV. design, but quite simple ; it would delight my dear Octavie. On the mantel is a clock, a simple block of

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

green marble with a very large dial. On either side two great gilt candlesticks; beyond the fireplace, a cupboard; on the other side, beside the window, a small table. To the right of the door is a large looking-glass, swinging in every direction; the toilet-set is in fine Sèvres china with a simple thread of gold. The wash-hand basin is big enough to take a bath in (well, perhaps this is an exaggeration). The jug holds a bucketful of water. Then, round the corner, is the bed; wide and high off the ground, downy, and delightful to lie in. Then the writing-desk, fitted with paper of all sorts, quills and steel pens, sealing-wax, pounce,<sup>1</sup> pin-cushion, pins, taper, time-table

<sup>1</sup> Readers of the younger generation may not know that pounce—a sort of fine dust or powder—is and was used as an absorbent of superfluous ink in place of blotting-paper; it was shaken over the paper from a sort of pepper-pot—the pounce-box—and after a few moments shaken off again. Hence the speckled appearance of old letters. It is a messy process; some continental post-offices, which a few years ago still used pounce, were always grimy with the spilt dust.



## The Doctor's Room

of the posts, etc. . . . If to all this you add two Pompadour armchairs, two perfectly cushioned ordinary chairs, and over all the clean smell of new things, you will have an idea of the room I am using.

Having made the tour of the room to the right and the left of the door, I end with the window. There, dear wife, I spend some pleasant moments every day ; I have not been given the best view of the villa, but it is certainly the one that I prefer. My window looks to the north, which means that my thoughts fly overland in a straight line to Langrune. When I am awakened by the rays of the sun, which shines gaily into the room, and open my window to breathe the morning air, it seems to me that Langrune is there ; I picture to myself the room of my dear little wife, whose window, turning to the south, looks towards mine, and I bid her a distant good-morning.

. . . . .

Now, my dearest, here is the life I lead

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

down here. Listen well, all of you, big and little ; this is instructive, and will teach you how a man who is thought to be intelligent contrives to do nothing at all from morning till night, keeping his intelligence in repose for fear he should use it.

In the morning I wake between six and seven o'clock. I lie in bed a while, then I rise, open my window, smile at the rising sun, which comes up to one side of me, and fill my lungs full of the fresh pure air ; I think of God, who makes me see and feel all these lovely things ; and I think hard too, for a little, of Langrune and certain of its inhabitants ; I look to see if my beautiful cliffs are in the same place ; I look over the sea ; I search the horizon for sails, and look down to see if the gardeners are at work in the garden, and having given sufficient time to these interesting occupations, I begin my toilet.

This I make slowly, deliberately, comprehensively, minutely, like a man who has his time to himself ; however, I do not

## Life at the Château

dawdle, for I do not want to imitate Christine, who stops in the middle of combing her hair to watch a passing fly. I go ahead all the time, but very gradually and thoroughly. I shave every day, my beard grows so quickly! It would be terrible if I allowed it a few hours of life too much! One of the important questions I have to decide is whether I will make use of almond paste or soap. I finally decide, after long consideration and a great consultation with myself, that I will use the paste this morning (it is brown and of poor quality) and that I will reserve the soap, which is good and agreeably scented, for the evening.

My toilet completed, it is about eight o'clock; I write or read till my early breakfast is brought to me; it is tea, with excellent butter; the service of fine white Sèvres decorated with gilt and the Imperial arms.

Then I go out into the park, where I find the Prince, and this is my morning visit to him. Then I install myself on the cliff-

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

top, where I smoke a cigar, enjoying the beautiful panorama unrolled before my eyes, and the charming effects of the rays of the mounting sun as they light up the rocks, the sea, and the town. Then I sit down and try to read a few pages of "The Last Days of Pompeii." . . . On the cliff-top I have yet another source of amusement: the anxiety, trouble, and torment which I cause to all the guards, gendarmes, and police agents of the country. This unfortunate park is open to all comers, and can be entered from all directions with the greatest ease. As they are afraid of attempted violence, and very naturally so, the estate is surrounded by a host of agents with or without uniform, who examine all who enter or leave and follow the Emperor and the Prince in all their walks at a distance and unobserved. The part I have chosen for my retreat, which is the highest, the most distant, and the most solitary of all, is also one of those by which the park can be most readily entered; but as the inhabitants of

## Teasing the Police

the villa hardly ever go there the watchers usually content themselves by overlooking it from a distance. When I am quietly sitting there I am too far from those down below to be recognised. You should see the desperate signs which the agents make to me from the foot of the cliffs, to order me to be off ! My impassive manner upsets them altogether ; then an agent comes all the way round, very stealthily, and creeps up behind me. Of course I do not hear him ; I let him approach ; then I turn about, all astonishment at being interrupted in my work. Then he recognises me, and sweeps his hat off as he apologises.

When I have been long enough there I return to my room, where I read, write, or work according to the mood of the moment, until noon, the lunch-hour. A good table, well served ; all the courses are set on the table at once. I usually sit at one end, so that I can see every one at a glance ; notably their Majesties. After the meal, which does not take long, we go into the

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

drawing-room, chat, and arrange amusements for the rest of the day. I do not as a rule stay long. I like my liberty; what I want to manage is to be able to come and go with their Majesties as I like; and hitherto I have succeeded. Sometimes I pass the heat of the day in taking a siesta; sometimes I read English, or write; then I go out and visit the town and the neighbourhood, or accompany their Majesties on their walks. Thus on Sunday we all went to visit the foot of the cliffs that I see from my room, which are washed by the sea at high tide. Next day we went to sea in the boats of two vessels which His Majesty had despatched hither from Brest—I believe for the pleasure of his better half.

Well, in one way or another the day always passes, and dinner-time arrives. I make a second toilet, and like all the rest put on my best clothes—black coat, white tie, and thin shoes. Their Majesties are in full dress also, the Emperor wearing part of his decorations, the Empress having a

66



DR. BARTHEZ.

To face p. 66.





## The Doctor's Day

new dress every day, at all events so far. After dinner we talk in the *salon*, laugh a good deal—and already we have had a ball. I stop a shorter or longer time as I please, then I retire to read my letters, smoke my cigar, go to bed, and sleep until next day. Such is my life.

## X

23 August, 1856

TO-DAY, for the first time, I had a private interview with the Emperor. Before dinner the Empress had suddenly addressed me, holding out her pretty—I should say her beautiful—arm and inquiring of me whether she was feverish—she wasn't in the least—and adding that she felt a trifle uncomfortable, but had plenty of appetite and a very empty stomach. I advised her to eat a good dinner.

After the meal the Emperor signed to me to go and speak to him, and we spent some ten minutes walking on the terrace. He spoke to me of the Empress's health, and asked my advice as to the reasons for discontinuing sea-bathing at the present juncture. . . . From this the Emperor

## A Cheerful Surgeon

went on to speak of the dentition of the Prince Imperial, and seemed astonished to learn that teething may continue till the age of two and a half and even longer. Then, after a few words concerning the progress of the child's teeth, His Majesty spoke about teeth in general, and of American dentists and surgeons, praising the skill and science of the former—whence the habitual preservation of the teeth in America, while French dentists, being more often than not mere charlatans, cannot obtain such a result; he added that on the contrary the American surgeons were ignorant, and in this connection told me that at the time of his arrival in America he was attacked by a toothache, with an inflamed swelling, which necessitated the removal of a tooth; the result was a hæmorrhage, which necessitated the calling in of a surgeon, who declared that he really did not know how to arrest this flow of blood, adding that death might follow within a very short time. However, the bleeding was arrested by

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

cauterisation, but the surgeon judged it advisable to keep on calling every day for a long time afterwards in order to lance the gums, until the Emperor decided to tell him not to come again.

After a few words on the structure of the teeth, His Majesty expressed his surprise that Nature has not provided for the replacement of the teeth when lost, seeing that she provides so abundantly for the reproduction of horns and antlers. "For instance," he said, "the deer in the park at Saint-Cloud lose their antlers every year, and every year the place from which they grew is subject to a process of heat and activity until the completion of the growth of the new antler, which hardens into horn and falls anew." I remarked to his Majesty that teeth and horns are only very remotely connected; the latter are much more akin to the skin and the hair than to the teeth, which seemed greatly to surprise His Majesty.

. . . . .

## XI

8 September, 1856

. . . THEIR Majesties take outdoor exercise almost every day, in one direction or another, far or near, on foot or driving, and I go too or do not go, according to the mood of the moment ; one never knows beforehand where one is going, the Emperor usually saying : " Let us be off ! " and they are off. You should be satisfied with this account of our outings, which is in answer to your wishes ; it is precisely what you wanted to know, and you ask nothing more. So we are both content, and I will end here.

Come, come ! I thought I had filled my four pages, and here is a last page quite blank ; so I will squeeze my lines together in order to gossip a little longer with my big Sophie. What shall I tell her? . . .

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Ah, we were talking about our outings.

Well, then! We did go to Bayonne, but not to visit the citadel, as you were wrongly informed. As a rule on these excursions the Emperor is with his amiable consort in the first conveyance, and drives himself. He takes the first road he comes across, good or bad, and goes ahead as a scout. When he no longer knows where he is he asks the first urchin he meets with in what part of his Empire he is. The boy, who does not speak anything but Basque, does not understand, and remains gaping; so the Emperor sets off again, always at random, and gets us back for dinner between seven and half-past eight. On the day you speak of we were making for Bayonne, and took a multitude of winding roads in order to reach Boucan, the last railway station before Bayonne, on the banks of the Adour. There we set foot on the ground again and made off across the sands in the piniada. . . . Ah, papa, papa, not so fast! What is a piniada? Why, my daughter, if you stop

## Excursions

like that at every fence my paper will be filled before the end of my excursion. You must see that I am saving my paper. I am not wandering much from the path, I do not turn aside, I do not stop on the road, I am wasting neither my time nor my paper, and you stop me like that, all of a sudden and without warning! What is a piniada? It is hardly worth stopping for. It is a forest of pines . . . in cultivation for the turpentine harvest. At least, I do not know whether the last condition is indispensable; it may be it is simply a pine-forest, cultivated or otherwise.

. . . . .

As a result of walking through the piniada, we reached the end of it and the brink of the sea, at the mouth of the Adour, in sight of the bar, and not far from the jetty. . . . But really, papa, what does all this mean? I don't understand a word. . . . All these things are very interesting, my dear child, and I have seen them with

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

much enjoyment. But if I stop to explain them the Emperor's outing will be much too long, his dinner will get cold, and it is getting late and time to return. If you are very anxious you can ask more questions about it for me to answer in the next letter.

So after walking to and fro on the jetty and admiring the waves which are thrown up by the bar (that is, the heap of shifting sands which lies at the entrance to the river and makes it so difficult to land), we returned to Boucan, two hours and a half or three hours after leaving it; a long excursion, as you see, which their Majesties managed perfectly well. This shows you they have legs and feet just like you and I, which you might have doubted, as they are Emperor and Empress: for you might not know that they are made like other people. Finally we got into our carriages again and went through Bayonne once more, which during our drive had decked itself out to receive us, and greeted us with frantic hurrahs; and then we returned at full speed to the villa, which





THE EMPRESS AT BIARRITZ.



## A Kind Heart

we didn't reach till after eight, and it was all your fault for having made me stop on the way so many times.

Well, let me see, are those all your questions? No? . . . The Empress walks on the beach in a white dress after bathing—yes, she does sometimes.

The other day I had gone to Bayonne for my own amusement, and on my return I was told: "Go quickly to the Empress in her bathing-machine; she is asking for you!" Was the Empress hurt—was she feeling ill? Good God, didn't I run! and I soon reached the water's edge and Her Majesty's tent. I was shown in; I found Her Majesty with her two ladies-in-waiting in the simplest of bathing dresses, laughing at the top of their voices. "Good!" I said to myself, "no one is dead here." Her Majesty told me, "Don't look at us, Doctor!" (but that I had done long ago). "Madame, it would not matter if I did," I replied to Her Majesty, who began to laugh again, and asked me to see to a sick child she had

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

picked up on the road. She made me examine it then and there, and the prescription was made up at Her Majesty's expense. On leaving we took one of those walks of which you have spoken, passing by the pierced rock, by the old port, and returning not far from the Basque shore, with no other escort than two or three persons of the household, wearing round bonnets like your father, with muddy shoes and old trousers.

Yesterday evening we went with the Emperor only to look at the bar again ; we went on the jetty the other side of the Adour. The wind was high, the sea furious, and the waves broke one after another, huge and roaring. We took a boat from the *Pelican* and went up the Adour, part of the time sailing, part of the time rowing, and returned very late. The Empress thought we were all killed. . . . There was a great ball at eight o'clock ; we did not finish dinner till nine ; there was a great deal of dancing, but I refrained ; at ten I went to bed ; at eleven I was asleep, and in the morning I

## More Excursions

have begun this letter, which you have made me make such a length that I was not able to finish it before my visit to the Abbé Cestac. . . .

## XII

5-12 *September*, 1856

HONOUR to the noble. I am going, my dear Octavie, to begin a series of portraits by that of the Emperor. It is no slight matter to depict such a man as Napoleon III. . . .

I see him here from a very restricted point of view: I am the witness of a small portion of his private life: this is all I shall try to paint. When a model is posing in a studio, and the students round about him try to represent what they see, each can reproduce only a portion of the model, an aspect which is not that which the others see, and no one sees him or can represent him as a whole. I am one of these students, sitting a very, very long way off, and seeing only a very small part of the man; and it

78

## A Portrait of Napoleon

is this which I wish to draw for you. I shall try to make my picture exact, but do not for a moment suppose that the whole man will be there.

Then in an intimate letter I improvise as I go along ; I do not arrange my matter ; I let my pen run on with all its negligences, its imperfections, its lack of order. I shall make no corrections.

Why this long preface? you ask me. Between us two there is no need for me to justify myself as I should need to do were this intended for the public. Then why? Perhaps to justify myself in my own eyes for having ventured to undertake such a task, and to account to myself for the imperfections of the result. To justify is not the word : it is so that I should not deceive myself as to the value of my portrait ; so that I shall not imagine that I can either know or depict the man completely, the sovereign who has attached me to his person, and to whom I become daily more attached.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

I go on and on and don't begin, and I am commencing to understand the length of my preamble ; I am spinning out the beginning simply because the matter is difficult, and because I am hoping that while I am chattering my ideas will finally take shape.

The Emperor is a small man ; his face is long and strongly marked, the shoulders wide and rather sloping, the body powerful, the lower limbs very short. This disproportion, especially noticeable when His Majesty is standing, is increased by the long goatee, which every one knows, and which makes his face look still longer. As a rule the Emperor walks slowly, his toes turned out, his body leaning to the left, or more rarely to the right. When he wishes to walk quickly or to run he makes great play with his arms and shoulders, as if to assist his short legs. When he stands his head is scarcely ever straight on his shoulders. It is turned either to right or left, so that he always looks more or less sideways.

His forehead is high, wide, bare at the





THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON III.

*From an engraving of the portrait by Cabanel.*



## A Portrait of Napoleon

temples, and well developed. His eyes are small, of a light blue, and slightly veiled ; they have a perpetual smiling and kindly expression. At other times, but more rarely, they have a dull, staring look which is rather peculiar. The nose is large and prominent, with thick, wide nostrils, sensual and very mobile. The superior muscles of the neck are thick and strong and prominent behind the jaws. This produces a somewhat ungraceful effect, which is not shown on the coinage. The effect is this : the lower part of the head is much wider than the upper, and as the hair on the latter is not plentiful the top of the head seems flattened, and the skull ill-developed at this point. All this, I own, is not a flattering portrait. But the evident disproportion of the head and body is so great that it attracts attention. Is this because of the singular contrasts I have tried to paint, or because the sight of the man recalls the services he has rendered France and the great things he has done? I do not know. However, I must admit that

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

in himself he pleases and attracts ; for one thing I can affirm—that here the habitual expression of his face is smiling, benevolent, kindly, and gentle ; often with a look of the frankest gaiety, sometimes with an air of gentle and malicious irony, especially when he is with the Empress. He is like that with all the members of the household, who rarely have important or serious conversations with him in public. But directly he meets in the *salon* men who can discuss with him the interests of the little country we live in or of any other locality his face becomes serious and keenly interrogative ; he listens to what is said, even to opinions with very little foundation, with attention and wonderful patience, and he seems to remember everything ; he will then speak, at much length, and seriously ; however, he readily gives explanations, raises objections, and seeks to be informed. In all the excursions we have made he inquires into the needs of the locality and what could be done for the good of the country.

## The Emperor's Occupations

Here he is much occupied with the problem of making something grow on the sandhills he has bought with a view to making a park. He spends a great deal of money in having pines and tamarisks planted, in protecting them against the sand and the sea breeze, in consolidating the sandy soil, in which the first tempest may dig great ravines, and in planting turf which refuses to grow. The future will tell us the result of all this. I conclude from this that the Emperor likes to meet difficulties, and to overcome them.

The Emperor works every day, with his secretary, before and after lunch. What does he work at? I do not know. It is probable that he does not lose sight of the trend of affairs. Thus yesterday he showed us the plan of an uncultivated tract of land which he had just had purchased for the installation of a permanent camp. Also he made me write to his dictation (by chance there was no one at hand to render him this service) two dispatches, one to the Minister

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

of the Interior in reply to one dealing with administrative matters, the other to the Minister of Public Works to ask for a list of dwelling-houses vacant in Paris.

I was saying just now that the Emperor is rather ironical and even something of a tease. He gave us a little example the other night at dinner. The Empress was talking to a Spaniard and was speaking of trees which had been planted at the time of her birth. "They ought to be tall by now," she said. "Why, yes," said the Emperor, "they are thirty-six years old." "Wretch!" replied the Empress, laughing, who is not nearly as old as that.

The same day after dinner there was some talk of bull-fights. As a Spanish woman, the Empress has a frantic affection for this kind of spectacle. She spoke of it with an animation which gave quite a lyric beauty to her face. She cited the names of famous toreadors who are the idols of the women of Madrid. In this connection some one mentioned the names of those who should be

## Chaffing the Empress

here for the coming performances at Bayonne. "But I do not know them," she said; "I have never heard their names; they were not of my time; where were they when I was in Spain?" "At the breast," replied the Emperor, with the greatest calmness. The Empress turned towards him, only half-comprehending; then suddenly, "What impudence!" she cried in a serious tone, but so comically that we all burst out laughing.

The Emperor is greatly attached to his wife: he watches her at times with an expression which cannot be misunderstood. It has been said—it is said daily—that he is not faithful to her. I have no means of affirming or denying the fact. Certainly I can see in the Emperor's face some of the signs of sensual need. I can easily distinguish by the manner in which he touches his wife when the flesh speaks rather than the heart; but all the same, I am not mistaken in asserting that he has a real affection for her, one of those affections

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

of the heart as we understand it, my dear Octavie.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor is kind and gentle, although he knows perfectly well how to keep people at a distance when need be ; he also knows

<sup>1</sup> A few years later I was at Saint-Cloud, at the château, chatting with some of the Emperor's household. This question cropped up. His Majesty's infidelities were well known to these persons. In the middle of the conversation this phrase escaped from my lips almost unconsciously : "When a man has a wife as charming as the Empress, I do not understand his going elsewhere in search of pleasure." This produced a momentary chill, and after the first embarrassment had passed : "Come," said General Rolin, "Barthez here is talking politics." And with that the conversation came to an end.

For the rest, when conversing with their Majesties, I never hid my repugnance for the custom of keeping mistresses on the part of married men, and hence my firm intention of being faithful to my wife. It was perhaps because their Majesties were aware of my opinions in this respect that I became the hero of the following adventure. I was one day called in by a lady in the Champs Élysées, whom I did not know and who did not mention the name of any patient of mine. I found her stretched on her bed in a very provocative toilette. She was a very beautiful young



## A Curious Adventure

how to win their attachment by a host of little considerations, insignificant in themselves, but meaning much coming from such a source. Thus the other day, as I was telling Sophie, the Empress was bathing and

woman, who stated that she was the wife of an elderly foreign admiral. She was no more ill than I was, and contented herself with conversing with me in a manner that proved her to be a well-informed and intelligent woman. She prolonged the interview by changing from subject to subject, and asked me to call again. I did not quite know what to think of this visit, and although somewhat astonished I promised to repeat it; however, an envelope lying on the table of her *salon* betrayed the fact that she had relations with the Imperial château, where she was known as "the beautiful C——." I was speaking of this later to one of Her Majesty's intimates, who knew her. Of this I was sure, because it was his name that was on the said envelope. He blushed and stammered without giving me a direct reply. I was eventually convinced that Her Majesty wanted to test the solidity of my virtue. She must have laughed heartily if the fair C—— told her that instead of making love to her I had held forth for more than a quarter of an hour concerning the excellent education which the Jesuits give their pupils. In any case, I had a good laugh on my side.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

sent for me; I had been away for some hours, and the fear of keeping Her Majesty waiting gave me wings, and I was running and leaping over obstacles in order to reach her the sooner. The Emperor, who was on the terrace, seeing from a distance the effort I was making to save time and space, shouted at the top of his voice: "Don't run so fast, there is nothing urgent," in order to save me a trot of fifty yards. Another day I was going round a corner of the château, and was about to light a cigar, when I met the Emperor. I uncovered and put my cigar away. We chatted a moment; then, seeing that I was hiding my cigar, the Emperor told me I might smoke, holding out his cigarette while I lit my cigar at it. Our life is full of these little attentions, which make intimacy agreeable and attach one to the man.

There is often a ball at the Villa Eugénie. Then a little more ceremony is observed, and their Majesties do not dance, unless, perhaps, just at the end, but I have never

88

## Relaxation

remained until that time. However, the Empress is very fond of dancing, and we sometimes make up for this lack of movement, due to the etiquette of great occasions, by romping among ourselves after lunch or dinner. General Ney plays the piano, and has a pretty talent for it; we dance the quadrille, the *boulangère*, and the *Carillon de Dunquerque*, which is the Empress's delight. I shall not forget the first time I saw the Emperor dance—stepping out valiantly, leaping, whirling, gesticulating, romping, and playing the fool like any young man. It was curious to see the “go” and joviality of the man who holds in his powerful hands the fate of France and a great part of Europe. That same evening there was singing; the Emperor gave us a solo—“Do you remember, soldier—say?” (*Dis-moi, soldat, t'en souviens-tu?*). He sang it in French and in German. He sings scarcely worse than I do, and knows his merits in that respect. It was, I can assure you, highly amusing.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

At other times there is reading at night, just as there might be at home with us. The Emperor reads aloud for the whole company, and often the book is the most tedious and badly written stuff you can imagine. It is a trial to all of us. People yawn, openly sleep, and are bored. The Emperor appreciates the book at its true worth ; he is a bit of a tease, and perseveres just the same ; he is pitiless, reads on and on, interpolating what he reads with nonsense and cock-and-bull stories, with ridiculous intonations or false declamation ; finally, reading atrociously and swallowing half his words, he passes the book to some one else, who methodically reads one line in three, so that the reading has neither head nor tail ; no one can make anything of it ; during all this the Empress embroiders, knits, yawns, and—sleep at last overpowering her—salutes us and goes to bed.

The Emperor is not artistic . . . he knows nothing of painting and scarcely cares for it. He praises Horace Vernet, Meis-  
90

## The Emperor at Home

sonier, and Rosa Bonheur. He appreciates no one else. Above all he detests Decamps, whom we all admire so. "There are," he says, "beauties of convention and natural beauties: I do not like the beauties of convention!" This is hardly artistic, but it must be admitted that there is some truth in this feeling. The other evening some one was speaking of a hunting-scene which is, I think, in the Louvre. "Ah, yes!" he said, "I know which it is; it is a picture in which you can see nothing but dogs' tails and hunting horns; and you can't tell one from the other because they are both curly!"

Do not forget that what I have told you does not represent the whole man. The Emperor has come here to rest. He lives with a few familiar friends, without etiquette. He strolls on the sea-front arm-in-arm with his wife, like a simple merchant. Here practically nothing of the Emperor is left; nothing but goodwill, which he radiates all around him; nothing but curiosity and

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

affectionate respect are painted on the faces of most of those who pass him out of doors. It is obvious that he is much loved here and at Bayonne. This soothes me somewhat when I think of the infamous statements and the falsehoods I have heard uttered in so many of the *salons* of Paris.

### XIII

19 *September*, 1856

YESTERDAY we paid a visit to MM. the Bulls, who had arrived the day before, to the number of fourteen. Six will be killed at each performance, two being in case of emergencies. They are not very large, but well knit, and very strong. It is said that they are vicious; but to see them in the pasture with their keepers, who do not leave them night or day, you would think they were gentle enough. Can you realise the life of these bull-breeders? They never leave their mountains nor their pastures, they sleep in the open in the midst of their beasts, they do not know what a house is, nor a cabin even, nor a bed, nor a table, having never made use of such things! What is even more singular is the way in

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

which they drive their bulls. Oxen are used for this purpose, and with them they can do as they please with the bulls. As soon as a bull sees an ox he goes and stands beside it, and follows as gently as a sheep. We had an amusing example of this last Sunday. At Bayonne a miniature bull-fight was given; all the same, they killed four bulls. A fifth managed to avoid death by the most singular behaviour. Instead of getting angry when teased, he ran away, and the red and yellow cloaks, instead of exciting his fury, made him flee the faster. It was a bull-fight the wrong way round. The Emperor did not wish him to be killed: he did not deserve the sword. But it was necessary to get him to go back to his den; so an ox was sent for, which entered slowly, and with measured paces came as far as the centre of the ring. Immediately Master Bull went to its side, and so the ox led him to his shed. The power of the ox is so great in this respect that its horns have to be blunted lest it should wound the bull.



## A Bull-fight

When the latter does not do as his mentor wishes, the other simply gives him a dig with its horns, which the bull takes good care not to return.

Another episode of the bull-fight on Sunday greatly amused me. A bull was driven into the ring with his horns very carefully padded, and an amateur bull-fight was announced. Immediately all the urchins of the country threw themselves into the arena, teasing the bull in every imaginable way; the bull rushing right and left, and now and then catching one of his tormentors, buffeting him and knocking him upside down with his horns.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I was once present at a so-called Landaise bull-fight. A cow whose horns are armed with knobs is turned out for the amusement of the lads. In the arena are cylinders of basket-work in the form of barrels open at both ends. When one of the lads is pressed rather too closely by the tormented cow he crawls into the basket, which the cow rolls over and over with her horns. It is very amusing to see the rascal tossed and charged as he lies in his basket, rolling in safety from one end of the arena to the other.

## XIV.

*22 September, 1856*

I DID not make the journey to San Sebastien, much to my disappointment. The Empress, who is never seasick, was anxious that all those who accompanied her should be immune from this complaint. She wished to avoid the far from graceful spectacle of sick persons, which is very natural. So I had to be eliminated, but, in spite of that, the sea was rough enough to upset the steadiest. However, the party was a very pleasant one.

I have not been to Bidache either. Her Majesty had invited so many people that there was not room in the carriages. As I have no official rank, and am the last to join the Imperial circle, I found I came last in this respect, and had to give up my,

96

## Drawbacks of High Society

place. This is one of the drawbacks (little enough to my thinking) of living with people of a higher rank. At home I am the master, and am accustomed to give orders (I hope I do not use too much severity); when I am at the hospital I am master and I rule; but here I am no one, and do not count, or very little. It does no one any harm to feel his inferiority sometimes; and, after all, what is there to complain of? Their Majesties did not send for me for the pleasure of my society, which is, down here, uninteresting enough; nor to prefer me before their private friends in the pleasures they indulge in. I ought to be very grateful to them for all they have granted me in this respect. A thorough welcome, liberty, amusement, a luxurious life, nothing wanting—but . . . but . . . as Sophie very truly says, I much prefer to be in the midst of my own little flock.

## XV

22-26 September, 1856

. . . ONE of the dominant characteristics of the Emperor's facial expression is calm combined with benevolence. He possesses in a high degree the precious faculty of being completely master of himself. In our intimate life he sometimes, it is true, gives way to laughter which comes near to crying—often on account of one of his own jokes, which are not always of the very finest brand; at other times he is dreamy, distracted, preoccupied; or, when one makes some remark about everyday life, or about some superficial matter that is not familiar to him, such as one picks up by reading the *Magasin Pittoresque*, for example, his face and eyes assume an expression of keen receptiveness; but in general he is cold,

98



THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON III.

To face p. 58.



## A Lively Empress

serious, tranquil, *compos mentis*, as the Latin has it—I don't quite know how I should translate it. He does not talk much, he does not raise his voice, he shows no animation ; he is unmoved, unexcited.

Not so the Empress, whose fine, sensitive features reflect her feelings both keenly and rapidly. In a moment joy, anger, animation, pleasure, desire, enthusiasm, activity, paint themselves on that deliciously pretty face. She is a child giving herself up to every impression of the moment, and allowing it to appear in every feature and every movement of her person.

The Empress is no longer quite young, yet on the whole she looks remarkably young and pretty. None of her portraits gives an exact idea of her. She is prettier, more handsome, more gracious, more alive than any I have seen. Every part of her body displays a remarkable purity and delicacy of construction. Whatever costume she wears, whatever position she assumes, whatever be the feelings that

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

animate her I can but admire her, and it needs an effort to remove my eyes from the contemplation of her charming person. Her profile is fine and pure. The disproportion between her nose and the rest of her face has been greatly exaggerated: it is hardly perceptible.

The oval of her face, somewhat long and regular, although a little compressed at the level of her temples, is very characteristic. Her eyebrows, fine and very well shaped, droop a little at the outer corners.

Her blue eyes, which are amply large, are a little close-set. Her mouth is very gracious, and not badly cut. The only fault she displays—and even that is hardly to be remarked—is an occasional slight reversal of the upper lip, when the inner side of the lip is slightly visible on either side of the central line.

Her wide, well-modelled shoulders droop gracefully; her bosom, which she displays a little too much and too frequently, is beautifully placed and modelled. Her colour,





THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE.

To face p. 100.



## The Doctor Embarrassed

as a rule, is rather too pale. But when, in moments of emotion, her fine white skin becomes flushed, the tints which cover her bosom, throat, and face are so delicate, so delightful, and so justly distributed that it is impossible not to be moved.<sup>1</sup>

Her arms are well shaped and sufficiently plump; the wrist is remarkably slender. Her hand is charming, as charming as yours, dear wife, which is the highest praise I can

<sup>1</sup> One evening at Saint-Cloud she sent for me to come to her dressing-room, to speak to me of the Prince's health. She was seated before the glass, and to speak to me with greater ease she made me sit almost facing her, leaning against the dressing-table while she proceeded with her toilette. In this position she revealed her manifold beauties, which I was almost touching. The environment of dresses, perfumes, lights, and those beautiful shoulders, that rose and white skin, all this was so overpowering that I felt very sensible that I was not made of stone, so that I had to look at the ceiling lest my voice should tremble in speaking to her. I have thought since (but it is certainly a daring idea) that she very possibly put me in this position in order to amuse herself with my embarrassment.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

give it. Her figure is well poised, and her long, slender foot seems always at ease in its narrow slipper. The ankle is as slender as the wrist ; and the leg, which the crinoline reveals a little too far, is well made, although a trifle slender. In short, she is a woman of good race, whose type is at once charming and distinguished.

The general impression of her personality fits very well with her function of sovereignty. Not that she has that grave, serious, imposing majesty which we are rather in the habit of supposing in great historical figures, such as Elizabeth of England ; she is a thoroughly gracious and truly feminine Majesty.

I have seen her in every kind of costume : in her simple, ugly bathing-dress ; in her dressing-room when her maid was undoing and brushing her long, lovely hair—it is a deep blond, with golden lights here and there ; I have seen her in morning and evening dress, in city clothes, in ball dresses—and everywhere and always I have admired

## Crinolines

her. But certainly her town frocks and hats suit her less perfectly than anything else.

She changes her clothes very frequently. Since we have been here I do not think I have seen the same dress more than twice, and not many have had the honour of being worn as often as that. The amplitude of these dresses is something fabulous. It is beyond any idea that you can form from what you have seen in Paris. All this stuff is supported by a sort of skeleton of extremely flexible iron. The Empress is greatly attached to this cage, which to us seems very ungraceful and inconvenient. She sticks to it in spite of the quips of the Emperor, to whom she simply replies that she does not know how she lived so many years without a cage. I can only find two excuses for this fashion. One is that women who wear it have their legs free in walking, and are not hampered by skirts and petticoats hanging on their calves and thighs and impeding their movements; the other, in her case, is that there is a sort of

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

harmony between the amplitude of the woman and the size of the apartments in which she lives. In our little rooms, to get through our narrow doors, walking in the street and on the pavement, such a thing is as absurd as it is inconvenient. But in these great, lofty apartments a slight woman in tight-fitting garments would be lost, would seem of no consequence. Here a dozen women adorn the *salon* admirably, and are in harmony with the wide spaces, the ample seats, the width and height of the doors. I knew nothing of this effect, which I now understand, and I now see why this taste, false in itself, has nevertheless a certain justness in its application. A similar idea—I should say felt rather than reasoned—must have inspired the paniers of our great-grandmothers. The Empress's way of wearing her hair is another matter altogether; it is most graceful, and becomes her marvelously. It is as you have seen it in Her Majesty's portraits, completely uncovering the forehead, the temples, and the ears, although these are not perfectly shaped.

## Portrait of the Empress

I greatly admired this fashion, which is always substantially the same, being varied only by a few flowers at the back, or a garland of flowers, which, being worn in front, raises the forehead and gives it more majesty.

On reading over what I have written I do not find much to modify. Perhaps I should add that her waist, as seen from behind, when she wears a high and tight-fitting bodice, is too long and leaves something to be desired. It is true that from neck to waist she wears none of those additions which many women apply, in front, behind, or on their hips, to disguise ungraceful flatnesses, projections, or hollows; she shows herself as she is.

When she is tired or slightly unwell she loses some of her freshness, and one sees her real age more plainly. But in the evening she is blooming with youth and beauty. She has no need to select the women she invites in order to dominate them in that sense. Since we have been at Biarritz there

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

has almost always been a ball twice a week. I do not think I have ever seen such a number of such pretty women together. But I cannot compare them with the Empress. She shines in the midst of these ladies like the fairest flower in the garden. My admiration in this case is quite disinterested; for to-day I am convinced that she does not much like me, our temperaments and opinions being very different.

One of the moments at which the Empress appears to the greatest advantage, and when she takes all hearts by storm, is that when she enters the *salon* at a time when it is full of company. She then has an air of sweetness, modesty, and timidity even, which is delightful; and when she speaks to each of those present her face wears such an expression of benevolence and kindness, and she knows so well just what to say to each, and the expression of her eyes is so good, so affable, that it is impossible not to love her.

In private life her manners are much more



## A True Woman

free, she speaks a great deal, usually dominates the conversation, and asks very rapid and frequent questions. She gives very absolute opinions, sustaining the discussion with vigour, animation, and energy, and not without wit. She is full of prejudices, sometimes laughable, which she maintains with skill and obstinacy. But as a rule her opinions are based on good feeling and a good heart; qualities she possesses in a notable degree. She is passionate, but fundamentally good and honest. Her absolute ideas, as a rule, are far from being correct or founded upon sufficient information. But if she deceives herself, she has not and does not evince the slightest ill-feeling. I always hear her pleading the cause of goodness, kindness, clemency, without thinking much of legality or utility; it is the appreciation of a kindly right feeling rather than reasoning. And in this she does not fail to be a true woman.

Her goodness betrays itself not only in

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

the benefits that she spreads about her, which are imposed upon her by her situation, but also by her manner of bestowing them. On her excursions abroad she often picks up sick or miserable-looking children, brings them to the château, gets me to give my advice, and always sends them away with a good tip. The thing in itself may be merely politic ; but in her manner of speaking to the children, of touching and holding them, it is easy to see that she loves them, and that it is her heart that is speaking. This goodness is only tainted by the pride and satisfaction—legitimate enough, for that matter—which she feels on comparing these poor sickly creatures with her plump and vigorous son. Another very pretty detail, but one which you, dear wife, will perfectly understand, is that the Empress cannot bear any one to hurt the smallest creature nor kill it wantonly. Very often I have seen members of the house-party about to crush some insect or other which had inconsiderately entered the *salon*. They have

## More Characteristics

always had to catch it gently and carry it to a place more fitting for it.

This, you may say, is inconsistent with Her Majesty's love of bull-fighting; this is true. And there is another point of view of Her Majesty's character which I want you to realise.

There is nothing artistic about the Empress. She knows music, but does not care for it, takes no pleasure in it. I think she knows something of drawing, but she does not seem to understand painting and the fine arts very well. She does not care for them, does not feel them, does not appreciate them, or appreciates them wrongly. Yet some means is needed of satisfying the activity, the overflowing life that fills her to overflowing. For it is really she that is responsible for the swing and animation of life in the château. Without her one would die of *ennui*.

This will explain her ardent thirst for pleasure, and if to this you add a horror of any physical or moral suffering, you will

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

have yet another aspect of her character. No price is too great to pay to satisfy this thirst for pleasure or the avoidance of what is disagreeable to her. But this is too absolute a statement; I have seen her struggle against this feeling from a pure sense of benevolence, and in order not to cause pain to such as displease her. But it also happens sometimes that she gets carried away by this double feeling, and then she may become unjust and forget the humanity and goodness which are really hers. Here is an example—to a certain point excusable. I have heard her breathing flames and perdition against a man who thought of presenting to Biarritz an establishment for the treatment of poor scrofulous children.

“Did you ever hear such an idea?” she said. “A nice advertisement for my poor Biarritz! Who would ever come here if at every step one were to meet lame or disfigured invalids?” I myself was vigorously reproved for having had the audacity to say that the collection of bathing huts was incon-

## After-dinner Amusements

venient and unhealthy, and that it should be improved. It was nothing to her that Biarritz should be a healthy and beneficial locality in which invalids might come in search of health ; it is a place where a certain society should be able to install itself in order to keep the people of the château company, to share and contribute to their amusement ; anything else, even any pleasures that might compete with those of the château, displeases her. She has the egoism of pleasure, as she has a horror of suffering.

In respect of pleasures, I must interrupt myself a moment in order to describe some scenes I witnessed last night—the 25th—after a dinner to which several guests had been invited, the last remnant of the society of Biarritz ; it was a dinner of intimates, or nearly so. Not knowing what to do in the evening, games were suggested, while the Emperor was occupied with the Prussian envoy. A big circle was made of all the persons present ; all put their hands on a

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

string which went the round of the party ; and two persons placed in the centre tried to slap the hands that held the thread. These hands had to try to avoid the slap by rapid movements, without ever releasing the string. As you may imagine, there was a regular shower of slaps. Her Majesty gave and received them heartily, with the shrieks and laughter of a schoolgirl on her holidays. When a sufficient number of slaps had been given and received, another game was commenced. The ladies, assembled in one of the drawing-rooms, armed themselves each with a serviette folded in a loop, the two ends being held in the hand, thus forming a sort of cudgel with which a good blow could be struck. Each lady chose a gentleman—the choice made unknown to the gentlemen. Each of them entered in turn and went up to a lady, saluting her. If he had the luck to salute the one who had chosen him, he remained in the company of the ladies ; but if he was mistaken, all immediately fell upon him, overwhelming him

## A Romp

with blows from their napkins, till he had left the room. I have seen the Emperor pursued in this way by these ladies, jumping over chairs, tables, sofas; I have seen Count Hatzfeldt assailed with blows skilfully applied; I have seen the Minister of Public Works fleeing from the blows that rained upon his back, and I myself have received my fair share. You cannot imagine the enthusiasm with which the Empress throws herself into these games, which easily degenerate into a confused riot, a kind of battle in which the men, under a continual shower of blows, strive to disarm the ladies. The Empress is like an escaped schoolgirl, striking right and left, running, shrieking, gesticulating, and displaying not a trace of the majesty of a monarch.

You will understand that with such tastes and amusements Her Majesty sometimes loses the air of perfect distinction which characterises her in ordinary life, above all in moments of ceremony or display.

As long as the Emperor is present, as a

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

rule, she preserves her rank and her dignity, but when he is absent she sometimes gives way to postures, manners, and expressions which are not sufficiently those of a great lady. However, do not let us exaggerate; there is nothing serious in this; these are the merest trifles; and then there is a very good excuse for this slight failing of hers; she is not French; her education, and the kind of life she has led, seem to me, together with her natural temperament, to have resulted in certain characteristics and ways of thought and action the significance of which she fails to understand from the French point of view. Here is the proof: when she has used a word or expressed an idea which has seemed to astonish those about her, she has stopped, and blushed adorably, saying, "Have I done something wrong?" Another proof: one of her relatives whom I have often seen here is far more easy-going and peculiar than she; takes eccentric liberties which set every one laughing, and might put



## Bull-fights

very peculiar and very fatuous ideas into the head of a Parisian. "What do you expect?" the Empress tells us; "she was brought up like that, she does not know her manners are not conventional; but this freedom of manner conceals a depth of strict uprightness, and nothing could ever be said against her conduct." The Empress, who is far from producing the same impression, does not see that she goes a little way in that direction, which must be her excuse. Here again is the origin and explanation of all those rumours which have been set going about her, and which have no more truth in them than the calumnies which are spread about the Emperor.

Her training again explains the Empress's passion for bull-fights. "How should I not love them," she says, "when since my earliest childhood I have witnessed them once a week?" She knows all the details of this conflict of courage, intelligence, and skill with the strength, ferocity, and intelli-

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

gence even of the bull. She can distinguish the qualities and faults of the animal, its manner of attack, and the kind of defence that should be adopted. She knows the value of attack and parade, and . . . I cannot disguise the fact that all this is very interesting ; I have felt it myself ; and this interest conceals, so to speak, the sight of the blood and the cruelty of the spectacle. I will say no more because I know all this shocks you. That is natural, in your case ; but you can understand from what I have written that the Empress may be excused for having so far retained this taste, which she will lose, I expect, after a longer residence in France, and a greater knowledge of our manners. This spectacle could never become popular among us ; not only because in our climate it is impossible to raise the kind of bulls necessary for the purpose. The water, pasturage, climate, and sun of France make the Spanish bulls pine and even die.

You will have been able to judge from

## The Imperial Pair

this letter and those preceding it of the visible relations of their Majesties to one another. The Emperor loves the Empress, contemplates her with a caressing gaze full of tenderness, is weak where she is concerned, and yet rules her. I should say, that for him she is a much-loved, spoiled child, whom he allows a great deal of liberty, and for whom he will commit all sorts of follies, but whom he manages firmly enough when anything serious is at stake.

Both love their child devotedly ; there is nothing astonishing in that. But they are both perfectly ignorant of what is fitting for a young child. This is natural enough ; he is their first-born ; and they have had no experience in this connection. Spanish women as a rule have not an idea as to the rearing of a nursing-child. The Emperor is always nervous : he is always trembling at this, that, or the other—the merest nothings. The Empress is never afraid ; she looks forward ; she wants to accustom the child to all sorts of things ; and

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

then at the least trifle she collapses and loses her head. All this adds to the difficulty of arranging certain matters which are already hampered by other accessory circumstances. Happily, the Prince is in the hands of an English nurse who understands her business admirably, and has contrived to obtain a very great influence. Apart from a certain number of prejudices which I should never be able to destroy, and which on the whole are of no real importance, I should not wish to alter anything this woman does.

You ask me what part I really play here; what my position is. Up to the present time the Prince has been so well that I have had nothing of any importance to do for him. If I had my duties would be difficult, disagreeable, and unpleasant. Squabbles would be abundant in every direction; and sometimes I regret that I ever undertook the affair. I have learned much and have grown older in a month. The court is a peculiar world, which I do not

## A Difficult Position

much like, I cannot and will not say why. Then on my part I don't think I please the Empress, and I am not certain of having pleased the Emperor. Neither of them has any confidence in medicine or in physicians, and they carry this distrust to the point of injustice. The Empress is not ashamed to say that all doctors are idle and ignorant fellows who never do any work, that they try to cure illnesses and prevent people from dying, which is impossible, since the hour has struck, and that they do not try to alleviate suffering. When I protest against such ridiculous ideas she interrupts me and will have the best of it. The Emperor, who believes in magnetism, and willingly lends himself to charlatans, does not think we know much more. How can one practise medicine to advantage in such surroundings? Certainly I will do my duty conscientiously; but if ever I cured a sick person I should deserve no credit; it would mean that the hour had not struck; and what would it be if the invalid did not recover or recovered but slowly or partially?

## XVI

*27 September, 1856*

. . . THE last letter you had from me was pretty long. I am curious to hear if you found in it what you expected. The end is not at all what I should have wished ; I was tired and the nearness of the post hurried me. Certainly there is a little to modify ; but that will serve to balance the beginning of the letter, for it seems to me you are a trifle piqued by my endless appreciations and admiration. But what am I to do? I have said what I think ; ought I to conceal it? No, for I know you admire with me what is beautiful, because you know that in my case such appreciation leads to nothing. My admiration for the Empress would never affect a grain of the feeling I have for you, and you know what that is.

## A Charitable Expedition

. . . I have just had to leave you in order to go to Bayonne on His Majesty's service. I had to send two ostlers to the hospital, and when they were cured I spoke of the matter to His Majesty, saying that the service rendered was worth two or three pounds and that perhaps he would think it as well to recognise it. The Emperor immediately gave me forty pounds to be distributed among the most necessitous patients at the time of their discharge.

I was driven from Biarritz to Bayonne in a post-chaise, with a postilion and much cracking of whips, and accompanied by all this frippery I executed my commission. You see the Emperor does things in a biggish way. It is always so everywhere. We have scarcely ever been for an outing, however short, without His Majesty pouring out gold by the handful.

Come, come! I was a monster to revisit the bull-fight! What am I now, alas! who, after revisiting it three times, do not feel at all disposed to refuse to do so again? This

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

spectacle has affected me as it does many people—that is, one's interest in it increases in proportion as one sees it more frequently. But I must hold my tongue on this subject, or when I return home you may scratch my eyes out instead of embracing me ; and I want both to preserve my eyes and to be embraced.



## XVII

30 *September*, 1856

DECIDEDLY this will be my last letter from Biarritz, dear love. It is seven o'clock in the morning, and my luggage is being removed, to be sent to Bordeaux.

. . . . .

The day before yesterday we had one of the finest sights imaginable. A tempest, a real tempest, during which the furious seas fell upon the rocks and flung themselves up to an enormous height. What was not less curious was to see the Emperor present at the ruin of part of the works. Ah, Sir Emperor, you to wage war against such a mighty power as that! Labour for months on end, raise a wall of stone and mason's work, plant palisades, send for regiments

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

of men that all may be done well and quickly ; employ men by the hundred, harness yokes of oxen to carry stones and transport rocks, and I, the sea, when I come, I scatter, destroy, and sweep all away !

Well ! all is to do again, and that on the eve of departure. It is true that His Majesty is attempting a very difficult thing : to create a promenade at the edge of the sea, so that in walking one can escape from the sand, which is tiring to the feet, and to make grass grow where there is nothing but sand. But the Emperor is tenacious and fond of difficult things. The fact is that on this seashore, at the château, and in the park, he has produced very remarkable results, considering the difficulty of the task undertaken.

It is no less true that this storm has given us a soaking such as you can hardly imagine. When the sea is as furious as it has been here the effects it produces as it charges upon the rocks are so magnificent that one can but go out to admire the spectacle. So all the Imperial circle

## A Fine Spectacle

set forth, crossed Biarritz, and established itself at the edge of the rocks, where the sea was most furious, and where it broke in immense sheets. It was more violent than ever that day, and leapt over the loftiest rocks. Sublime and magnificent spectacle! At each fresh wave cries of admiration were uttered by the numerous spectators. But then, encouraged by the effect it produced upon our imaginations, the sea leapt higher than ever, and covered us with a torrent of salt water, the best part of which made for the Empress. To complete matters it rained like the Flood and swamped us with its cataracts. In a moment we were soaked to the skin. No umbrellas, no shelter, no carriages, and a good half-hour's walk to reach the château. The Empress, full of life and gaiety, made nothing of her trailing cage, pushed one and nudged another, and walked deliberately through the puddles as Christine or Ernest might have done. Beside her the Emperor regarded the pranks of his big baby the

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Empress with the utmost coolness and solemnity. The truth is that at times like this she gambols like a veritable child. For instance, yesterday, while walking, she came upon a bath-chair, jumped into it, and made one of the men wheel her. The day before she met a little shepherd-boy leading a sheep which was proceeding very unwillingly, and not without cause. She stopped, stroked the animal, and asked the little fellow where he was taking his sheep. "I am going to have it killed for eating," he said. "Horrible! I won't have it!" she cried, flushing. "I will buy your sheep; let it be taken to the park and looked after." And this is the woman who watches with enthusiasm while a sword is plunged into a bull, to say nothing of the preliminary torments inflicted upon him. Yet another contradiction; the human species is steeped in them, as we were soaked with the seawater and the rain.

. . . My word, now I have put my foot in it! The Empress so annoyed me the

## An Argument

other evening by speaking ill of doctors and medicine, trying to persuade me of the great virtues of table-turning and magnetism, that I discussed the matter with her—no, disputed it—for at least two hours on end. I treated such beliefs as they deserved. I said some very emphatic and very hard things. I saw the Prefect of the Palace making me the most comical signs with his eyes, to the effect that I must stop, or must not allow myself to be carried away. But who can stop me once I begin a discussion? You know how keen I get. I struck hard, straight, and often. The Empress retorted, and we were like a couple of dogs showing their teeth. Since then I think I get on better with Her Majesty. I helped her to pass two good hours, and I did not allow myself to be trampled under foot. The Emperor himself wanted to persuade me of the reality of magnetism, but I did not yield an inch of ground. . . .

## XVIII

*22 November, 1856*

THE first alarm as to the Prince's health. On getting a letter from Conneau at four o'clock I left for Saint-Cloud, where I arrived at six. The Prince had vomited in the morning an hour and a half after taking the breast; as a result he was pale, feeble, almost in a state of semi-syncope.

This little indisposition has given me some idea of the difficulties that would arise in the event of real illness. The Emperor, who knows nothing of the treatment of children, allows himself to be influenced by the first person who speaks to him with assurance, and does not repose sufficient confidence in anybody. He asks advice elsewhere than of the doctor, and impedes the rational treatment of the case. The Empress had at first

## The Prince taken Ill

the idea that the child was poisoned. Poor woman! Most happy mediocrity! you preserve us from all such fears as these.

But what promises, what interviews, what explanations have to be given and listened to . . . and how useless it all is! Conneau, as always, has been as kind as he is firm and reserved. Rayer wanted to give me a bit of a slap. "The Prince," he told the Emperor, "has given a proof of spirit in not wishing to take the soups they are giving him." This was well placed, as the Emperor will not admit that anything but the nurse's milk should be given up to the age of one year (an idea which he got from Turck at Plombières).

The worthy Rayer wanted to flatter His Majesty, and perhaps belittle me. But he made a mistake in judging so hastily, and in not recollecting, what he knows very well, that a system which may be good in principle does not always succeed in practice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I do not remember now if it was this winter or that of the following year when the Prince was attacked by a slight indisposition which Rayer again

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

On the other hand, while the wet-nurse will not have it that she can be ill or her milk indigestible, Miss Shaw desires the contrary, and would be delighted to see the wet-nurse depart. They are jealous of one another; hence difficulties and disagreements. But Miss Shaw will be the stronger; she will lead the Empress, who will lead the Emperor.

exploited very cleverly. The Prince took a slight cold, a slight bronchitis with a touch of fever. There was scarcely any sibilance in the chest. A few days' rest in bed, some *tisane*, and an emulsion would have been sufficient treatment; but the trouble was dignified by the name of inflammation of the lungs; an active treatment had to be applied, and a perfectly useless blister tormented the Prince for the greater glory of the doctor. What could I do against this authority, which knew how to get its way? Fight? I should not have been heard; I should have been crushed between my fears of their Majesties and the then invincible position of Rayer. Conneau himself was under the same constraint. And the Prince recovered by himself of his supposed inflammation of the lungs, and from the blister too.



## XIX

27 August, 1857

YOU are sighing for a letter, dear beloved little woman, and it is four days since I wrote to you. For this you must largely blame the Empress. Would you believe that I was so stupid as to show my bad verses to M. de la Grange! He had nothing better to do than to speak of them to Her Majesty, who wanted me to read them to her, and imagine my confusion! I had just come to see that they were false from beginning to end. I had cut decasyllabic verses in half, when the custom is to place the *cæsura* after the fourth syllable! Well, no one saw it, no one spoke of it, and flattery helped the bad verses to pass, and the Empress has asked me for others on the Prince Imperial. At this moment I am about to write, so I must leave my letter and set to work, and write some verses, which I send you. . . .

## XX

31 *August*, 1857

YESTERDAY—Sunday—the day was fully occupied ; Mass, the regatta, the bull-fight at Bayonne, and a ball, which lasted late into the night, filled up the time pretty well. To-day we have the bull-fight again. This horrible struggle attracts and disgusts at the same time ; it is full of emotions ; it demands so much address and coolness that in spite of all I enter into it and follow it with the keenest interest. But I am glad when it is over. Yesterday I saw with pleasure that the Empress is now less drawn to it than last year, and that she bears less easily the sight of the danger incurred by the less adroit of the men. I hope in time she will become entirely French and no longer want to watch this terrible sport. Yet

## Fascinations of the Bull-fight

I own there is something fascinating and really magnificent in the sight of the bull, foaming with rage and fatigue, set firmly on his legs, gazing at the matador and ready to rush upon him ; the latter, a tall, well-knit man, standing just in front of him at a distance of a couple of paces, with no other defence than a bit of red cloth and a long sword. This pose of the two adversaries is really fine. Then, when the bull, choosing his moment, lowers his head and charges down upon the man, who cannot avoid the terrible shock, a moment of anguish contracts the heart. But the moment does not last, and the bull, who rushes upon the steel, is suddenly checked by the sword as it enters his body to the hilt, passing through the back of the neck, by a spot no bigger than a five-shilling piece. From this you can judge of the sureness of eye necessary to pierce this part with the point of a long sword, which might so easily be brushed aside ; and also of the danger incurred by a matador who misses his stroke.

## XXI

5 September, 1857

MY verses pleased Her Majesty; that is all I know of the matter, since nothing has been said of them since. And they are the last I shall write for Her Majesty's eyes. One must know when to stop. They were good enough and genuine enough in feeling to show that I am truly fond of my little Prince; but I fancy there is a drawback to such exhibitions of my *savoir-faire*. Here who pleases God does not necessarily please His saints. The court is a singular world, where all are jealous of all the rest in general and every one in particular. Amid the congratulations I received I had an intuition of danger, and I draw back without the least desire to raise myself to the level of this world, which is not mine,

## The Doctor Moralises

and for which I can feel I was never made. My dear child, how petty and miserable things are in this world ! The human species is the same here as elsewhere. Its faults and virtues are just as mixed here as elsewhere, and I assure you from the bottom of my heart that our life of work, mediocrity, and independence is a thousand times preferable to this sort of existence, in which happiness depends on winning a smile more or less. Let us never complain of our lot, my dear, never, for we have happiness in our home.

The Empress is in excellent health ; the sea-bathing does her good ; she is not *enceinte*, I am certain ; I only hope God will not refuse her a second child. The Prince is admirably well : he grows and improves under one's eyes.

But I must return to some of the ideas I have previously expressed ; I do not want you to form an erroneous opinion of my life here. When I speak of annoyances, disappointments, and humiliations, I do not

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

mean on my own account ; every one here, from their Majesties downwards, treats me with all the kindness and consideration I could wish. With all these rich, titled, and highly placed people, I am on a footing of apparent equality, which I feel as a privilege, but, at the same time, I take care to keep in my place. I put into practice the parabolic precept : “ At the banquet take the lowest place if you do not wish to be sent down.” And I am, in fact, the last of all those here. I do not say this out of false modesty : the force of circumstances has decided it. Nobility of race, fortune, and social position have always ranked and established men above personal merit. Of course I do not speak of the few exceptions which have made transcendent merit the equal of the great of this world ; I speak only of practical every-day life. Now I know very well that my merit (and I have sufficient pride to assign it a fair value) is not so great that it ought to place me higher than I am, infringing the

## Philosophic Reflections

habits and classes of society. Moreover, our family nobility is recent and of the lowest scale; our fortune is non-existent. Finally, the profession of a physician is one of the lowest, and here at court he is classed last of all among those that approach the throne; or, rather, he is so unimportant that he has no rank. We should be very unwelcome and very absurd if we tried to place ourselves on a level with those that employ us. A profession that earns so much a visit is too nearly akin to domesticity to be set on a level with those which enjoy the independence given by hereditary nobility and wealth. But this, my dear, does not prevent me from preferring my simple profession a hundred times more than those which are open to the upper classes of society. Once again—happiness dwells at home with me; why should I desire to go forth and seek it in the smile of sovereigns (although I love them), and in a ridiculous struggle for its possession?

I have seen Mr. Home, the famous

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

medium who calls up spirits. I was very curious to make his acquaintance. Directly his arrival at Bayonne was known the Empress sent for him, and spoke of him to us. The entire belief she has in him, the animation and violence with which she speaks of him, really distress me. This is evidently one of the weak sides of this woman's character, remarkable as she is for her other qualities, physical, moral, and intellectual.

I understood at once the dangerous side of this weakness, and all the advantage their Majesties' enemies might derive from this belief, by spreading the report that they consult spirits upon the direction of the affairs of the Empire. This danger has occurred to a number of the Imperial circle. All this has greatly depressed me, and I felt very unfavourably disposed to Mr. Home. And as soon as he entered I disliked him intensely. His simple, timid, half-awkward air seemed to me to conceal a very able *savoir-faire*. I noticed between



## Home the Medium

his eyes and his mouth a contraction of expression which gives him a very disagreeable look of duplicity ; in a word, his face calls up a desire to smack it rather than any enthusiasm ; so, profiting by a few words of Her Majesty's concerning the hindrance which the presence of incredulous persons offers to the actions of beings of the other world, I withdrew without a word, and was not present at the *séance*, which, for that matter, was not very interesting. Last night Mr. Home dined at the château ; I was two places distant. I could see and examined him thoroughly, and I am convinced that his half-simple air hides a real duplicity. However, this second impression was not so disagreeable as the first.

After dinner a *séance* was held, and I understood from a few words which had been addressed to me that I was to remain. So I sat down with the rest round the table, my hands resting on it, and at once I felt the table move and quiver ; then there were raps beneath the table, in reply to other

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

raps, evidently dictated by an intelligence ; then there were scratching sounds right and left, and Her Majesty's dress was pulled ; a handbell was taken from the hand of a gentleman sitting at my side and carried to another part of the room ; an accordion which Mr. Home held in one hand played a delightful air with great accuracy ; all this took place under the table ; but at the end of a quarter of an hour everything ceased ; the spirit explained that it wished to express itself by means of blows struck under the table ; it dictated a remark to the effect that there were too many of us ; it mentioned the persons whose presence it did not desire, and I was among the number, the explanation of that being the incredulous smile which I felt was visible on my face ; so I had to depart. I learn this morning that the rest of the evening produced nothing more remarkable, except that a table leapt off its four legs.

You will ask me what I think of all that. These things that I have seen and heard

## The Séance

are true, just as it is true that I have just had breakfast ; they are out of the general run of things such as I can judge by such physical knowledge as I possess ; that is to say, I cannot explain them. But to conclude, therefore, that they are the result of sorcery ; that spirits or the dead return from the tomb in order to play the fool with a table—you will allow me to say that that is very far-fetched. Between these facts and the given explanation there is a gulf which, so far, I cannot possibly bridge. I am ignorant, absolutely ignorant, of the manner in which these phenomena are produced. But inasmuch as everything has to take place under a table, out of sight, and as one is not allowed to look, feel, or examine ; as long as I am not allowed to use such means as I have at my disposal to obtain information and avoid error ; as long as I am told that my incredulity hinders these manifestations from the other world, I shall say that I have a perfect right to disbelieve in spirits and to suspect the exist-

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

ence of very ordinary means, although these may escape me.

In short, Mr. Home seemed to me to be a very able man, not only as a performer of tricks, but especially as a man who can command intelligences ; but the spirits he evokes are not those of the other world ; they are living intelligences that do his bidding.<sup>1</sup> This is clear to me and others also.

<sup>1</sup> At Paris, in the Tuileries, His Majesty kept me over an hour telling me of a host of most singular feats which he had seen Mr. Home perform. He had taken precautions, he said, against any trickery, and had seen with his own eyes a heavy candelabra leave a mantel and move to another part of the room ; and he had looked under the table at which Home was performing and had seen a bell move and ring itself. He cited Mme. de Lourmel, who had seen her husband, dead some time ago at Sebastopol. Despite the good faith and intelligence of His Majesty, I could not accept such palpable errors, and the conversation terminated with this remark on my part : "Sire, when M. Rayer tells me that he has seen these things and that he believes them to be the work of spirits I might perhaps share his opinion . . . and yet . . ." I should have liked to see how this skilful courtier would have extricated himself from such an interview.

## The Doctor Incredulous

But . . . but . . . what will not the need of flattery lead to !

There, my dear child, that is what I think, and I assure you I should be happy to agree with you and think as you do. I know what your inclinations are in this respect ; not only does the feminine mind readily allow itself to be attracted by the marvellous, and in this respect you are a woman, but I know the opinion of a certain person to whom I am greatly attached only too thoroughly counterbalances the influence I should like to exert over you in these matters. . . . I will only say this : on my soul and conscience I have no proof that all these facts are not produced by very natural and ordinary means. . . .

## XXII

14 *September, 1857*

How I wish, dearest wife, that I could write to you hour by hour of what I see and learn and experience here! Unhappily my memory is so inaccurate that it is like a mirror, whose reflected image vanishes as soon as the object is removed. . . . I have had such pleasant moments, alone, at the foot of the rocky walls of the creeks, face to face with great Nature and with God; intoxicated with delightful feelings, with high and lovely thoughts. And I should like to make you witness from afar this human comedy that I watch day by day, and which so greatly interests me. I am hardly an actor in it myself, or only for a moment now and then; my part is that of an almost disinterested spectator. The





PRINCE NAPOLEON AND THE PRINCESS CLOTILDE.

To face p. 145.



## The Human Comedy

characters, faces, manners, ideas, and parts played are so varied, so curious, so different, and so remarkable, that I only wish I could draw you a portrait of every actor in the piece. Without judging what lies behind it all—which I hardly know—I should like at least to tell you of the surface; that alone is so interesting that I wish I had the pen of a Balzac. If I had time, if I could jot down what I see at the moment, and intersperse it with a few anecdotes—if I had not in a few days' time to resume my doctor's harness, I should undertake the task, not with any idea of succeeding, but with the certainty that it would interest you. There is too much material; later on, in our chats together, perhaps I shall be able to tell you of Prince Napoleon, of M. and Mme. Valeski, of Mmes. Montebello and de la Poëze, and of all these gentlemen . . . there are certain things better spoken than written.

I told you at the beginning that we had been to Bidache to visit the Château de

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Grammont. It is twenty or thirty miles from Biarritz. There were twenty-seven of us, not counting servants, travelling in three chars-à-bancs. It was a delightful journey, through fresh, green, hilly country. The ruins are superb, but much mutilated by time. Grammont was a beautiful château built upon a hillock in the midst of a delightful plain watered by a little river, which winds in all directions before making for the sea. While there we were caught in a torrent of rain, without so much as a roof to shelter us. The ruins are isolated; all the roofs have fallen, and only the walls remain. Between two showers we dined in the open air, after which we had singing and dancing amid the ruins; in the evening Bengal lights were burned to illuminate them; and finally we resumed our places in the chars-à-bancs, pursued by a storm of wind and rain; so we were all well wetted, soaked to the skin. In this condition we returned to Biarritz about midnight. A good supper warmed us, and we

## A Pleasant Excursion

all sought our beds with pleasure. No one was ill. Next day the most delicate ladies were fresh, lively, and quite ready to begin again. This outing inspired me with a few verses in the form of a song. This is how it was: when we had visited the ruins Her Majesty wished to be alone awhile, and sent us off to wander where we would. I took with me the old tutor of the Duke of Albe, who, having brought up the father, educated the sons also, and is now a friend of the family. He treats the Duke, the Duchess, and the Empress herself like children whom he has known all his life. He is a very interesting type of simplicity, good-nature, intelligence, and learning combined. I am very fond of him, and often talk with him. Well, I led him off to visit an old bridge with arches of unequal width which crosses the river. I was walking with Don Juan when from another direction we saw Mme. de M. and Mme. de P. approaching in company with two gentlemen; they also were making for the bridge. The ladies begged us to accompany them. The fact

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

was that the two couples had thoughtlessly set off together, and, not feeling quite sure what might be said of them in high places, were very glad to see us and keep us with them for the sake of appearances. We went on and on until we had lost sight of the château; the path seemed endless, and we were afraid of being scolded by Her Majesty on our return (these ladies were in waiting, so ought to have been close at hand). This unfortunate walk was the text of a host of pleasantries, and Mme. de M., who was perhaps afraid that her action would be criticised, kept on asking me, "Well, doctor, what do you think of our going off like this?" So much so that no one can make that remark now without every one shouting with laughter. Another remark also caused much amusement when repeated. These ladies, speaking of the unhappiness which they felt at being parted from their families, kept on repeating, "I need to be loved." You can imagine the retort that might be made. The refrain of my song was made of these two remarks.

## XXIII

18 *September*, 1857

MY DEAREST WIFE,—

I write with my eyes streaming with tears, sopping handkerchief after handkerchief. I have caught one of those delightful colds in the head that you know so well. I weep, I drip, I can hardly speak, hardly see, and I look the biggest fool imaginable. Yesterday I dined with Mme. de B., and hardly knew what I was saying ; and this morning I don't know what Her Majesty will think of my red nose. It is stupid, as apart from this I am very well indeed, and quite able to enjoy life.

You may be curious to know why I was dining alone with Mme. de B. Well, don't be anxious ; the proprieties were observed. We were, it is true, sitting at opposite sides of one little table, but we were separated

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

by a magnificent candelabrum with five candles, which threw a light upon all our actions, and behind us were a butler and a footman, who watched our slightest movements and drank in every word.

And then Mme. de B. has the misfortune to be anything but pretty. Moreover, she is a saintly person, very good, and full of religion. Also I am much in love with my dear wife. All this, I think, will allay the thoughts that this *tête-à-tête* might put into your head. The fact is that the Court went for an excursion to Spain, and the Empress was inflexible where I was concerned. I could not obtain permission to be of the party; I was sea-sick once last year, since when I have not been able to set foot in a boat, and I felt the prohibition the more because yesterday the sea was absolutely calm; not a ripple on its vast extent, so I am sure no one was ill. However, one cannot have everything, and there were plenty of other pleasant things to console me.

## Portrait of a Lady

The song I sent you in my last letter has had a marvellous success. It has been read, re-read, and sung. I have been asked to add a couplet introducing a remark of Don Juan's which greatly amused the company. I had to give copies to the two ladies and to M. Morio de l'Ile, who took part in our walk. Mme. de M. has been very pleasant to me ; she chose a moment when I was not in my room to enter and place on my desk (addressed to my children) a great stick of sweetstuff, on which she had written : " Souvenir of Bidache, but not an emblem." Because, she says, the sweetstuff is destined to dissolve and disappear, but not the memory. Now, Mme. de M. is young and pretty, and very amiable—oh dear, oh dear !—this, my poor Octavie, is much more dangerous than the *tête-à-tête* with Mme. de B., and in order to tease you a little I shall give you a portrait of this young lady. Her face is a very long and very distinguished oval ; she has large blue eyes, well placed, with an expression of amiability

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

that is just a thought coquettish ; fine, well-pencilled eyebrows, a smooth, rather wide forehead, hair of a deep blond, plentiful enough, a straight nose, just a little too strong, a moderately wide and gracious and rather well-cut mouth, and the chin just a little prominent. Her throat is slender, the shoulders drooping very gracefully ; they are well set back, and the skin is fine, and prettily tinted with rose and white ; the bosom well modelled, well placed, a trifle too thin ; the back deliciously supple and undulating ; and with all this she is rather pale, a little too thin, and often fatigued. When she walks it is not with her legs only ; her whole body sways in a peculiar manner, which is not at all disagreeable. When she speaks to you she often leans her head toward you, lifting her wide and beautiful eyelids, and slightly raising the corners of her mouth ; then she has perhaps rather too coquettish an air, but she is so adorably pretty that you readily forgive her. In short, Mme. de M. is a very charming young



## A Charming Woman

woman physically, and, I should think, morally as well. In her character, as in her manners, there is a certain tinge of coquetry, but it is not too marked; it is a light that certainly attracts the moths, but does not singe them. Now, my dear little wife, you must know I am on excellent terms with Mme. de M.; when I am in a corner of the *salon* she will often leave her place to come and sit by me, and chat with me, or will make me sit by her; and if she goes to take a bonbon from the huge box which is always in the *salon* she chooses one to offer me. Decidedly, poor dear, you must be jealous, you can't help it. . . . No, my dear, you need not be. All this is not meant to distinguish me from others; it means simply one thing, namely, that my position in the present house-party is somewhat modified. The reserve of which I spoke in a former letter<sup>1</sup> has borne fruit which

<sup>1</sup> My reserve? Was this really the cause of the fact I mention here? At this time all the villa felt such a need of movement and amusement, such a desire to

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

I hardly looked for. For the moment I have become the equal of all these great personages and make one of their society; so I accept the new position. I accept it, but I shall not abuse it, be sure, and you may always count on my firm intention of remaining as I am. Happiness lives at home; I am never tired of telling you that.

escape the dullness that would so easily seize on a whole circle of people temporarily torn from their usual occupations, that I am inclined to think otherwise. Seeing that I did not lack a certain vivacity, that on occasion I could help to diminish this *ennui* and bear a hand in the business of distraction, I was temporarily accepted as a not wholly useless member of the little inner circle of the villa. My reserve by itself would merely have left me in my corner, and when all was said I had not really a higher position in their society than the previous year.

## XXIV

19 September, 1857

LAST night I told Mme. de M. that you had written to me to ask if she were pretty. She has tormented and teased me in every imaginable way to find out what I replied. I told her I had drawn her portrait, that it was so lengthy that I could not repeat it, that it occupied two large pages. . . . In short, I so greatly excited her curiosity that she was as charming and amusing as possible. Apart from that, she is a very kind and excellent woman, much attached to her husband and children, and already jealous of the future wife of her son, who is nine years old. The sort of little clique which we have formed among us—Mme. de M., M. Morio de l'Ile, de la Grange, and myself—has very nearly got us into trouble with

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Mme. de la P., who has quite wrongly got the idea that we laugh at her ; in this case the unfortunate yet perfectly innocent ironical expression of mine has produced its effect. Mme. de B. was the first to remark it ; she has noticed that I make all sorts of asides which are more or less reflected in my face, so that one day at lunch, during a general conversation, while I was watching the different expressions of those present, and, so it seems, amusing myself thereby, she suddenly cried out, " Come now, look at the doctor sneering away in his corner ! " This drew general attention to me, and as I am not supposed to be entirely an imbecile people are just a little afraid of my judgments. But I really do not deserve that they should concern themselves with my opinions to that extent.

Mme. de P. has taken our little clique very seriously, feels out of it and believes herself laughed at, and it has needed all the efforts of the excellent Morio to calm this tempest in a teacup.

## Mme. de la P.

And after all one must admit that Mme. de la P. is much less attractive than Mme. de M. She has, I should think, a sound and steady character, seems to be very intelligent, and, what would please you, is greatly interested in natural history. She loses no opportunity of enriching her collections, which have been made and arranged by herself and her husband.

All I know of her moral and intellectual qualities is thus entirely in her favour (and after a number of years I persist in this judgment, in spite of the gossip of certain malicious tongues), but her appearance only partly corresponds. She is tall, and as thin as she is tall ; her hair and eyes are almost black, her skin brown, her nose very aquiline, her chin very prominent, her mouth receding, and her lips short, which gives her rather a look of Punch. But there is such an expression of youth on this face that it partly atones for what is lacking in her appearance ; and she gains greatly by longer acquaintance. Her really ungraceful

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

and deplorable points are her figure and her shoulders. Her shoulders are very high, very round, and very bony ; and far from hiding them Mme. de la P. uncovers even more than all the other ladies. (You could never imagine what an expanse of backs, shoulders, and bosoms one does see here.) She has no more bust than the back of my hand ; and the upper part of her shoulders and back being the widest part of her person there is nothing to support her clothes, which are always on the point of falling down, so that her shoulders, back, and the upper part of her arms display themselves quite undressed. I am always afraid she will come right out of her clothes. She reminds me of a cherry-stone about to spring from between the fingers that squeeze it. All this, even if I exaggerate a little, is not particularly becoming ; and as she is also rather frigid, reserved, nothing much of a conversationalist, and with no perceptible liveliness or go, it is not amazing that the moths fail to flutter about her. Mme.

## A Pleasant Circle

de B. is the only lady of the company who obtains less attention (except from me, for I greatly like and esteem Mme. de B.). It must be admitted that the circle of women one sees here is remarkable ; the Duchesse d'Albe and Mme. Valeska are as pretty and charming as they are pleasant, and the visitors who frequent the villa are fully their equals ; I can assure you they are a very agreeable company to look at.

## XXV

24 September, 1857

WOULD you believe it, my dear wife—yesterday I was compelled to dance? Yes, I actually had to dance. Mme. de M. and Mme. de la P. invited me, subjecting me to all sorts of little persuasions, so charming, so coaxing, so caressing. . . . “My little doctor” here, “my little doctor” there, and such sweet little hands taking mine that I had to give in. I danced two quadrilles and the lancers (yes, Sophie, the lancers; you learned the lancers so that I should dance them at Biarritz). Yes, I danced, and as there was not a crowd the ample dresses scarcely embarrassed me. I took those great steps that you’ll remember, which set every one doing the same, and we all laughed till our sides ached.

I think Mme. de M. was very pleased



## Mme. de M. Again

with her portrait, but she has amused me tremendously by the way she has taken the slight qualifications I added to it. She has been teasing me about her slightly too decided nose, her slightly faulty mouth, her pallor, &c. . . . It was pretty to see the effect upon her of those revelations which she had not counted upon. I get on capitally with her now ; however, I am just a little reserved, for even if I am quite an old fellow I might eventually inspire feelings of jealousy in some of those gentlemen who so readily hover round a young woman who is pretty, intelligent, pleasant, and a bit of a flirt. For that matter, she knows very well how to keep them at a convenient distance, and she does so because she loves and respects her husband, who, they say, is rather too elderly for her, and would soon be cut out if his wife did not behave as well as she does, even though she does permit herself a little coquetry, and surrender herself to the joys of the dance with such remarkable heartiness.

## XXVI

24 *September*, 1857

I HAD a good laugh the other day on learning the substance of a telegraphic correspondence between the Emperor and his adored spouse. The latter wished to make a trip before returning to Paris. At first there had been some question of returning by the Pyrenees; but the Empress does not care for driving, and detests the everlasting kow-towing of the officials; so, preferring a sea voyage, she suggested to the Emperor three routes for him to choose from: as I told you, they were the Pyrenees, the Corogne, and Cintra. She proposed the latter because she wanted Corogne—a piece of simple feminine duplicity. The Emperor replied: “Make the Pyrenees journey; the other two are absurd.” He had the last

## Cross-purposes

word. If you could have seen the Empress's face on telling us of this result you would have laughed. But she did not admit that she was beaten, and replied that she wished to return by way of Toulon. The Emperor replied: "Return by Marseilles." He had not understood. The Empress wished to return by sea, making a voyage round Spain: a voyage of ten or twelve days. The Emperor thought she would cross the Pyrenees and reach Marseilles by land. The Empress would not admit that this was the Emperor's supposition; so another message was sent as follows: "What steamer should we take to return by Marseilles?" Reply: "You are mad, as well go to America." This time it was enough to split one with laughing. "He writes by telegraph," she said, "as if it were a sealed letter," and she made the most droll and disappointed grimace you can imagine. Since then the idea of the voyage has been abandoned.

## XXVII

25 September, 1857

IT will amuse you to hear that one of the means by which Mr. Home evokes his spirits has at last been detected. The Empress is reduced to saying that the Home of to-day is not the Home of other days ; that he has lost his power and is seeking to replace it by subterfuges. The matter is simple enough. Mr. Home has thin slippers, easily drawn on and off ; he has also, I fancy, cuts in his socks, which leave his toes free. At the proper moment he throws off a slipper, and with his toes tugs at a dress here and there, rings a handbell, gives a rap on this side or that, and the thing once done quickly slips his foot back into its slipper again. This was seen by M. Morio, who drew up a full signed and

## Collapse of Mr. Home

written statement, with all the details necessary to establish the genuineness of his discovery. Home saw that he was found out, and I can tell you he cut a very sorry figure. He went out saying that he was ill, and all night he has had nervous attacks and visions and has been surrounded by spirits. Finally, as he was judged to be on the point of death, a priest was sent for, and a doctor. (Home lives here with a family of foreigners who lodge him, look after him, and coddle him; it is a case of Tartufe and M. Orgon; Tartufe is a sorcerer instead of a sham devotee—Orgon is a Pole.) Next day, death seeming still to be imminent, the doctor of the château was begged to go to the succour of the dying man, which he did in great haste. I found my man stretched out in bed, and surrounded by the anxious, disconsolate family. His eyes were red, his face swollen; he was calm and overcome with excitement by turns. And he had the deceitful expression I have mentioned before. He pitched me a long tale about

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

his sufferings, the spirits that tormented him, and so forth. Unhappily he had the most natural pulse imaginable. Then he pretended to go into a trance ; his eyes turned up and became fixed ; evidently the spirits were returning and about to torment him again. So I took him by the arm, shook it rather roughly, and said in his ear, " Come, Mr. Home, no nonsense ; let all the spirits be ; you know I don't believe in them." The trance ceased at that, and he looked me straight in the face, and saw plainly enough that I was laughing at him ; and the spirits immediately flew away. I withdrew, assuring the disconsolate family that there was no danger, that it was merely a matter of a nervous attack, and that they must not be in the least anxious. I did not fail to give an account of my professional visit ; I even drew up a written statement, which I gave to M. Morio de l'Ile to add to his account. The evocation of spirits at the villa has suddenly ceased, and we will hope this unworthy charlatan is revealed in

## The Spirits Depart

his true colours. But Her Majesty cannot admit that any one could have the face to play tricks on herself and the Emperor for a whole year.

## XXVIII

9 September, 1858

WE have been enjoying the most frightful weather. It rains three-quarters of the day ; we scarcely see the sun ; but the temperature is pleasant, neither hot nor cold. We have had no outings excepting a short excursion to the bar of the Adour, in order to see the work of destroying the bar. If this succeeds it will be yet another service on the part of the Emperor, who would provide France with an admirable harbour at a point of her coast where the sea is dangerous and there is no means of getting into shelter.

We have to kill time somehow, and hardly succeed in doing so. For my own part I have begun on the work I brought with me ; and I saw with pleasure that I was getting ahead with it a little way. I had written some pages and intended to continue, but I reckoned without my host, or rather without their Majesties. The day

168



## Bad Weather

before yesterday I had just had a long conversation with the Emperor, concerning his health, and was quietly sitting in my little room (alas! I no longer have that which I used to occupy on the first floor. I am now on the ground floor, and lose the view of the lovely motion of the waves). I was getting ready for work, when some one came hurriedly to find me, on behalf of the Emperor. "Confound it!" thought I. "What is the matter? What has happened? Is it an attack of apoplexy?" I armed myself with my lancets and rushed off, to arrive in the middle of the *salon*, where every one was laughing their best. "Come along, doctor, and write us some verses." It was verses they wanted! They were endeavouring to make them in common, and had called me to assist the workings of their minds, their Majesties being only too willing. They think verses can be written as easily as that. No one had succeeded in hitting on a subject nor in writing a single line. I proposed *bouts-rimés*, which each would

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

have to fill in. M. Mocquard, M. Favé, and I succeeded; the results were so poor that I did not trouble to keep a copy.

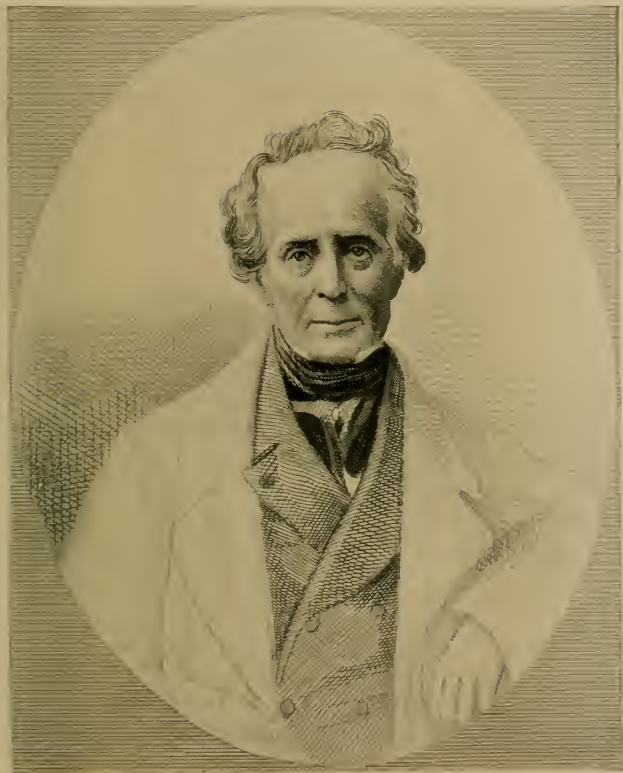
This is what led to this poetic debauch: the day before M. Mocquard, who is certainly one of the most intelligent and singular characters one could wish to meet, had improvised four stanzas, and the Emperor had set them to music. They were sung, and we laughed till we could laugh no more: more than the verses warranted, considering them in cold blood, but they were amusing enough in the heat of the moment.

Here they are.

Adrienne is Mlle. de Montebello; Staoli, Mme. de la Poëze; the Princess is the daughter of Prince Murat.

### I.

Il était un petit bateau  
Qui doucement voguait sur l'eau.  
Il emportait mon Adrienne,  
Ah ! fasse le ciel que j'obtienne  
Ce qu'elle me promet toujours.  
Ah, viens, viens donc à mon secours,  
Dieu des amours.



J. F. C. MOCQUARD.

To face p. 170.



## M. Mocquard's Verses

### II.

Bientôt je vis la Staoli  
Qui me dit : Mon petit ami,  
Laisse donc là ton Adrienne.  
J'ai bien de quoi qui te retienne.  
Tu cherches l'amour qui te fuit,  
Et c'est vers moi qu'il te conduit,  
O mon petit.

### III.

Soudain arrive la Princesse,  
Insensé, quoi ! Lutter sans cesse  
Indécis entre deux beautés !  
Connais donc mieux leurs cruautés.  
Ah, viens plutôt vers la sagesse,  
Elle est plus sûre en sa tendresse,  
Foi de Princesse.

### IV.

Un roi disait : Fou qui s'y fie,  
Et cependant je me confie  
A votre charmante leçon  
Et je me soumets sans façon,  
Sans m'arracher à Belzébuth,  
Et je vous devrais mon salut.  
Turlututut.

I cannot write down the music for you—it  
is about as good as the verses ; there was,

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

in particular, an intonation on the *Soudain arrive* in the third verse, with a fall on the last syllable—*Princes . . . se*—which is very spirited and amusing.

## XXIX

14 *September*, 1858

WE went for an excursion to Pas-de-Roland all together ; three immense vehicles full of guests. We drove along the picturesque, hilly road, arrived at the foot of the Pyrenees, and once more I saw the mountains. You will understand the pleasure I felt on once more finding myself before these enormous giants. There were not, it is true, those jagged peaks, covered with snow, which you and I admired so much ; but great, beautiful mountains with magnificent landslips and enormous blocks of marble ; then the torrent roaring at the bottom of the valley ; then a superb profusion of enormous chestnuts. Ah, beautiful, adorable Nature ! What delightful sensations she gives rise to ! We dined on the grass ; perhaps you remember a picture

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

by Vanloo which represents a dinner of this sort ; it was the same thing, but for the landscape and the costumes. The cloth spread on the ground, each guest seated, reclining, or standing, and receiving at random a wing of chicken, cold meat, or lobster, a glass of old Bordeaux or champagne or sherry. All talking, laughing, singing, just as it came into their heads. All this at nightfall ; the shadows struggling in vain against the light of a dozen great torches ; after dinner, songs, laughter, and good cheer. We enjoyed ourselves like simple bourgeois, and returned to the villa at midnight. A good hot soup was waiting for us ; after that bed, and sound sleep.



### XXX

22 September, 1858

WHAT a jolly evening we had yesterday! I want to tell you about it while my memory is still fresh, before I reply to your letters. Yesterday we set out, some twenty-five of us, without counting servants, with hampers of food, two chars-à-bancs, and an omnibus. The servants and the provisions were inside the omnibus, the masters on the top, high above the road. I was one of the latter, following my usual taste. The horses flew—there were four, driven by a driver who did not seem quite to know his business. Beside me were Counts de la Poëze and de Riencourt. The latter, a good driver, and afraid of losing his skin, was in a perfect fever, foreseeing all sorts of possible accidents, which I did not foresee, and therefore

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

did not greatly fear. The fact was that at certain places the road was anything but reassuring, being far too narrow for a tall, wide, heavy vehicle drawn by frisky and vigorous horses. We had several times to get down for greater safety, notably at a village called Saint-Pé, where the track was very narrow, the streams very shallow, and the crumbling old bridges anything but solid. Well, after driving about three hours we reached a charming valley at the foot of the Pyrenees, and drew up at M. Michel's door. . . . That is nothing, you will tell me. Make no mistake: this M. Michel is positively the king of the country; he is a merchant . . . in contraband. The French customs officers protect him and help him to smuggle from France into Spain. As for smuggling from Spain into France, that he does into the bargain; but as Spain produces next to nothing, that branch of his business amounts to so little that it hardly counts. This M. Michel, allied to good Bayonne families, still young, active,

## A King of Smugglers

intelligent, and wealthy, wields a great influence in that part of the Basque country which is his home. He is really a sort of monarch in this strange and beautiful country, where a language is spoken which is neither French nor Spanish—a pure, complete language peculiar to this country, its origin lost in the night of time, unknown to any; a country lying partly in France and partly in Spain; exempt from the tax on salt and tobacco (?), exempt from sending its young men into the army or navy (?); a country which adores the Emperor, and shouts at the top of its voice: “Long live Napoleo! Long live Papa!”

Well, this M. Michel, forewarned of our visit, had made a tour in the Spanish Basque country and had obtained mule-litters and mountain horses and a number of Spanish muleteers.

After a light meal at his place we took the road. I was in a panier, acting as counterpoise to the Prince

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

of Moscow; and we set off for the mountain. Ah, my dear, what a lovely country! How can I paint those gracious hills, covered with verdure, those enormous chestnut-woods, those magnificent ferns, the winding, climbing paths, descending, skirting the ravines? I was in one long ecstasy. I saw quantities of gentian in flower; unhappily I could not stop my litter to pick them; but I had a few picked hastily by a servant, and as you read this letter they should be at Versailles; one only has its roots; perhaps it will strike root again?

After an hour and a quarter we reached the goal of our journey. This was a spot of the most extreme wildness, by the entrance to an immense cave, which serves the contrabandists as refuge and storehouse. The entrance, sunk in the spur of the mountain, forms a great semicircle some 40 (?) yards in diameter. This vast entrance, which is the work of Nature, is ornamented by fine stalactites of stone, and

## A Smugglers' Cave

the whole circumferent mountain-side is covered with plants, bushes, and trees, clinging to the cliff in the most picturesque manner. It is all so grand and yet so gracious, so savage, yet so beautiful, that I was ravished in mute contemplation. Great and beautiful Nature, work of God, how admirable thou art! I could hardly tear myself away from the spectacle. We soon entered the deep, gloomy cave, and went forward for more than a quarter of an hour by torchlight, admiring the natural irregular pillars that support the immense vaulted roofs, so high that our torches failed to penetrate thither. Then fireworks were lit, their dazzling radiance, bluish and fantastic, revealing the depths of the cave in all their wild beauty. We could then see the immense subterranean cavities and the superimposed stories of the cavern, which we left without having explored its extremities. On returning to the entrance a fresh spectacle awaited me; the landscape, seen from a distance through this magnificent

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

frame with the delicious tints of the evening light, filled me with an emotion of quite another quality and full of sweetness. While we were in the grotto the Spaniards, climbing to the upper stories, sang to the accompaniment of the guitar. We found them, on emerging, perched above our heads, in an upper opening, and there they performed their dances and sang their songs. How much you have missed, my dear, who are so sensible to the beauties of Nature! How our hearts would have beaten in unison before these beauties! I have religiously gathered, from the wall of the entrance to the cavern, some pretty little plants which I send you; not because they are rare and curious, but as a souvenir of the pleasant emotions I have experienced there, which I recover as I write to you.

However, night came on, and the table was laid on the turf opposite the cavern. We sat at table, talking, and happy—yes, happy, for all saw the Empress's delight at once again hearing the voices and songs

## A Supper in Spain

of the Spaniards, who, during the whole of the dinner-time, continued to sing and play with a swing and vivacity, a grace and a finish which were perfect. The emotion of the Empress was so evident, and at the same time so unalloyed—the emotion of one who gazes once more upon her long-forsaken native land. This emotion affected all of us, it was so genuine and so generous. But after dinner it was quite another matter. Time and space had saved us from the curious, the indifferent, and the authorities ; we were alone together ; and when, after dinner, the Basques began to dance to the sound of the guitar the dances of their country, the Empress could hold out no longer, and, flinging aside her hat and mantle, she began to dance a most graceful fandango. She was simple and delightful, and the expression of her face was ravishing. Every one felt that the Empress had returned to her own country, and for a moment had recovered the liberty of other days. All sympathised with her, and would

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

willingly have prolonged these moments of delightful illusion.

But night had fallen ; we had perforce to tear ourselves away from these delights. Each resumed his mount ; and my litter, strapped on by a well-knit, handsomely built muleteer, once more received the Prince of Moscow and myself. Our worthy muleteer, excited by the songs and dances in which he had borne his part, continued to dance and sing as we went along, conversing with his mule, and from time to time favouring us at random with all the French words he could call to mind. Our return was as gay as our evening had been, and at one in the morning we reached Biarritz, without having exhausted the cup of pleasure. This day will remain in the memory of all as a sweet and pleasurable remembrance. I shall always regret that I could not share such moments with my dear Octavie and my little ones.

I should like to end this letter with an account of an excursion made a few days





*D'Orsay fecit  
Low House  
19 Octobre  
1865  
London*

NEY, PRINCE DE LA MOSKOWA.  
*By D'Orsay.*



## Fontarabia

earlier to Fontarabia, in Spain. Time presses, the hour for the courier approaches, and I do not want, my dearest, to leave you longer without news. However, I will try.

Well, one fine day we boarded a steamer and set off past the lonely plains of the Spanish coast. I was lucky enough to escape sea-sickness; but indeed there was no reason to be ill. The sea was calm, and except for a few showers sent us by the clouds, the crossing was very pleasant. We landed at Fontarabia, opposite Hendaye (where the brandy of that name used to be made), close to Irun, and not far from the famous Île des Faisans, memorable by reason of the marriage agreement of Louis XIV.

The country is beautiful, but the eye is saddened by the sight of Fontarabia, which is merely a black and melancholy ruin. A frontier town, fortified, alternately taken and retaken, the first to receive the shock of cannon-balls, often suffering a change of

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

masters, it leaves an impression of unbearable sadness in the mind. The town is small ; it takes but little time to walk round it. The atmosphere of old Spain is perfect. The place used formerly to be inhabited, during the fine season, by a host of noble personages who had superb houses, of an excellent style of architecture, ornamented with their coats-of-arms cut in the stone. All this is very interesting, and I am very glad to have seen the place despite its melancholy.

Having traversed the main street and visited the church, we watched a company of Spanish soldiers manœuvring, and then entered a sort of café or restaurant (the Posada of Melchior Sagarzadu), where we were served with chocolate, bad pastry, and detestable water. During our walk we were surrounded by the authorities of the country, and a multitude in rags, dirty, and stinking as violently as stinks can stink, preceded by an amateur band which favoured us with a most horrible cacophony. All this was

## Voyage of the *Pelican*

neither pretty nor agreeable, but it was not lacking in the picturesque.

Finally we re-embarked and set out for Biarritz, the dinner-hour being long past and the sea much less calm than on our arrival. Then, oh, then, faces grew pale, turned green, and lengthened, and sea-sickness invaded the *Pelican*—such is the name of our boat—and once in sight of Biarritz the anchor was dropped, and we waited to be put ashore and escape from the torments of the sea; but the sea was too rough; and the boats which tried to get alongside were no sooner at the vessel's side than they flew up in the air or down in the trough. The ladies lost all their energy; their huge cages made it impossible to get down into the boats. The *Pelican* perseveringly danced at her anchor; the sea-sickness redoubled; . . . an hour and a half was lost, then the anchor was raised, and we steered towards the mouth of the Adour. More sea-sickness; hitherto I had resisted, but now . . . my head whirled, my heart

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

floundered, and very secretly, very discreetly, I returned to the sea a little of Señor Zagarzadu's bad cup of chocolate. Immediately relieved, I landed from the *Pelican*, quite proud of my prowess, and we all got into open carriages, in a thrashing rain which accompanied us all the way to Biarritz; it was eleven o'clock at night. Dinner had been waiting for us since seven. It was devoured, in spite of sea-sickness, and next day some one—I don't know who—wrote some verses, as bad as possible, but I send them as they are rather amusing.

### PARTIE DE FONTARABIE SUR LE PÉLICAN.

Aujourd'hui vendredi  
A une heure et demie,  
Rendez-vous à une heure  
Sur le port des pécheurs,  
Lariffa fla fla.  
Lariffa.

De cet ordre en retard  
Qui vous prévient qu'on part,  
L'exécution pour vous  
C'est donc : Débrouillez vous.  
Lariffa.

## “ Partie de Fontarabie ”

Deux maris très prudents  
Songeant à leurs enfants  
Laissent leurs femmes s'embarquer  
Et courir des dangers.

Lariffa.

“ Si nous perdons nos femmes,  
Que Dieu sauve leurs âmes,  
Pourvu que nos bambins  
Ne soient pas orphelins, ”

Lariffa.

Sclafani l'amiral,  
De mer craignant le mal,  
Dit : Je suis général  
Et . . . je monte à cheval.

Lariffa.

Un officier de ter  
Sujet au mal de mer  
Avant que l' clairon sonne  
S'est sauvé à Bayonne.

Lariffa.

Passons les accidents  
De notre embarquement.  
Et nous voilà partis  
Tous pour Fontarabie

Lariffa.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Soudain l'orage gronde,  
Le vent soulève l'onde,  
Le commandant s'écrie :  
Ouvrez vos parapluies.  
Larifla.

Au son d'une musique  
Mauvaise et fantastique,  
Nous tournons le rempart  
Criblé de part en part.  
Larifla.

Dans une posada  
On prend le chocolat  
Que le beau Teresa  
Promptement fabriqua.  
Larifla.

Puis le temps menaçant  
Et le ciel se couvrant,  
A six heures sonnant  
Se fait l' rembarquement.  
Larifla.

Rien à mettre sous la dent,  
Car le beau *Pélican*  
S'est par perçé le flanc  
Pour nourrir ses enfants.  
Larifla.



## “ Partie de Fontarabie ”

Sitôt appareillé,  
On commence à rouler  
Ce qui ôte la gaité  
A six dames invitées.

Larifla.

De notre souveraine  
La figure est sereine,  
Elle brave les éléments  
Et navigue en chantant.

Larifla.

Une marquise blonde  
Dit que même sur l'onde  
Un chasseur avec art  
Peut lancer un renard.

Larifla.

Sur une main auguste  
Qui lui soutient le buste.  
Soudain elle se penche  
Disant : Gar' l'avalanche

Larifla.

La fragile Adrienne  
Avant qu'on la soutienne  
Sur le pont a tombé  
Et ne s'est rien cassé.

Larifla.

## Empress Engénie and her Circle

Bon dieu ! Quel patatra !  
Qu'est ce donc que cela !  
C'est la princesse Anna  
Et madame Waleska.

Lariffa.

Mam' de la Bédoyère  
Est étendue par terre ;  
On lui offre un coussin  
Mais ell' ne répond rien.

Lariffa.

En mémoire de la flotte  
La ravissante Clotte  
Dédaign' les p'tits bateaux  
Et préfère au vaisseau.

Lariffa.

La marquise Marie  
Un peu abasourdie  
Sent la première douleur  
Qui ait atteint son cœur.

Lariffa.

Que Dieu me le pardonne,  
A la mer je le donne,  
Il était à Camille,  
Ça ne sort pas de la famille.

Lariffa.

## “ Partie de Fontarabie ”

Mais voici qu'on arrive  
Un peu à la dérive.  
Les cœurs tous soulagés  
Demandent à diner.

Larifla.

Mais hélas, on apprend  
Que tout en s'inquiétant  
Et Mocquart et Tascher  
L'ont à moitié mangé.

Larifla.

## XXXI

29 September, 1858

THE day before yesterday, at ten o'clock, we embarked on the *Coligny*, and, followed by the *Pelican*, having unfurled the Imperial colours, we set off in magnificent weather. The sea was absolutely calm ; but the swell was high, and our light vessel rolled in a fashion very annoying to the susceptible. I was only able to avoid sickness by remaining on the bridge, by the captain, high above the centre of the vessel. There the movement is less and one breathes the cool air, very welcome in such a case. In this way, I contented myself with feeling extremely ill, and of course I could not possibly eat. But when after two hours we arrived at San Sebastien, while we were in the roadstead, and guns were being fired and boats put off,

## San Sebastien

I munched a wing of partridge, took a glass of wine, swallowed a few raisins, and thus ballasted I was able to come down.

We were received with much pomp by a numerous population, headed by the authorities. We passed through the streets between two hedges of Spanish troops and were conducted to a church of most singular architecture, such as I do not think we have in Paris; thence to the town hall and the central piazza, the arrangement of which is very curious and unusual; it is intended for bull-fights.

The harbour is fine, and might be of great service if kept in good condition. What I was able to see of the surrounding country seemed pleasant.

Before leaving the Emperor wanted to give a sum of money for the poor of the town, but it was proudly refused; he was told that there were no poor. Spanish pride hides its sufferings; it was easy to see, at many a gaily-decked window, that opulence does not reign throughout the town. But

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

if this pride were the result of municipal charity and properly, distributed labour who would presume to rebuke it?

Well, we re-embarked to the sound of cannon and set off accompanied by the frantic shouts of the multitude ; then, after an hour and a half, we arrived at Zumaya, a small fishing village. The landing is difficult, large vessels remaining in the open ; boats put out to take us off, and after fifteen minutes' rowing landed us in the little harbour. There we found two indifferent diligences, the oldest and most out-of-date vehicles you could wish to see, and a dreadful open wagonette which the Emperor mounted, driving his ridiculous turn-out himself. We squeezed into our diligences as well as we could, crack went the whips, and off we went at a trot into the heart of Spain. What a beautiful country, what splendid mountains ! I could see a few crags piercing the verdure ; and as we rushed by I noticed some flowers, which I wish I could have brought you. We passed

## A Strange Turn-out

villages built of dark stone, the roofs covered with tiles of a deep red. These villages have a sad and gloomy aspect which contrasts sharply with the beauty of nature, and gives one a chill at the heart. At last, after a drive of two hours, we arrived at Loyola, where we were received by a troop of soldiers, who surrounded the Emperor's trap, following it because it was His Majesty's. The sight was grotesque, and the Emperor could not refrain from laughing. The fact is he was driving a dilapidated trap, drawn by two miserable hacks; whip in hand, hat a little on one side, according to his habit; preceded by an uncouth band, and surrounded by running soldiers, he presented the most extraordinary spectacle. I was behind, on the box of the diligence, so that I saw the performance from the best seats. My neighbour whispered in my ear: "Droll, isn't it? The Emperor looks for all the world like a quack introducing himself to the public!" and unfortunately it was true; the comparison rose in one's

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

mind unbidden. Having passed through a straggling village in this order, we resumed our journey, and very soon saw the valley opening out ; and on the floor of the valley, surrounded by beautiful mountains, the seminary of St. Ignatius de Loyola, where some hundred and fifty priests live and pursue their clerical education.

I hesitate to describe this : apart from the fact that I have hardly the time, it was so affecting, so replete with memories of many kinds, that it would need another pen than mine to describe this magnificent cupola rising from the wilderness. All the interior is in marble, marble of the most beautiful and most varied qualities ; a veritable mosaic of marble, of the size of the Val-de-Grâce in Paris. The architecture is as rich as it is scholarly. This wilderness contains a marvel, which seemed to me above anything that Paris can offer of this kind. Unhappily the church and the convent are not finished ; money is lacking. In the convent premises is included the house which



## Loyola

was occupied by St. Ignatius, when, being wounded, he quitted the military service to be converted and to become a priest. I saw the chapel where St. Francis de Borgia, one of the ancestors of Comtesse Sclafani, the Empress's cousin, said his first mass ; many other memorable things, which we passed too rapidly considering their importance. Of this visit, too short and incomplete as it was, I shall retain a memory as of one of the landmarks of my life.

But it was night, and we had to leave this beautiful spot. We were far from our vessels. After a light meal we set off ; all the villages were illuminated ; the kow-towing was not over yet. At last, at half-past ten, we embarked. We dined ; no, I did not ; I made an attempt, but it was impossible ; the wretched rolling prevented me. I went up to station myself on the bridge again, where, well wrapped in my overcoat and rug, I fell into a sound sleep, which lasted till we were in

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

sight of Biarritz, at half-past two in the morning.

(In 1859 the Prince Imperial was sent to Biarritz alone, the Emperor and Empress following later.)



VILLA INHABITED BY THE PRINCE IMPERIAL AT BAGNÈRES DE LUCHON.



## XXXII

BIARRITZ, 20 *August*, 1859

FOR some time before leaving Saint-Cloud, and even while in Paris, the health of the Prince had not been as good as usual. From time to time, almost every day, I believe, patches of nettlerash appeared, and he was somewhat pale, and irritable, and very "contrary"; meanwhile, on the 14th and 15th of August there were children's parties, performances, receptions, and therefore fatigues disproportioned to the age of the child, for he is only three and a half years old. From this cause arose a condition of cerebral excitement, easily produced in an intelligent nature; taking in everything, understanding everything, trying to account for everything, even things beyond his age;

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

always asking questions ; wanting to know the why and wherefore of things ; making comparisons and applications of astonishing justness in one so young.

On the top of the cerebral and bodily fatigue caused by these ceremonies, which were excessive and untimely, came that caused by the journey to Biarritz. The Prince slept little, and was excited ; I found him pale ; his eyes had circles round them. However, he had plenty of spirit, gaiety, and appetite ; his digestion was normal ; there was no fever, and the nettlerash was no longer visible.

However, on the evening of the 18th, on the day of our arrival, there was ocular evidence of imperfect digestion, which I did not see, and which Miss Shaw attributed to the change of diet during the journey.

He had a good night, and next day plenty of appetite, and was obviously cheerful and hearty, although a trifle pale.

During the day the Prince was taken out ; but his walk was stupidly cut short by



THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.

To face p. 200.





## The Prince Indisposed

squabbles between Mme. de Brancion and Miss Shaw. The first rightly wished to take the Prince to some part sheltered from the sun; the second, wishing to have the best of it, and therefore to oppose the other, wanted to place the Prince out in the sun, under the shade of a parasol; and there she did have him for some time, afterwards taking him to the more sheltered portions of the Park, where the sun is very hot, and one feels no refreshing breeze from the sea. The Prince felt uncomfortable, and asked to be taken in; they did not notice he was uncomfortable, and forced him to stay where he was some time longer. Finally, on his insisting, they took him in, and before passing the threshold he brought up his dinner. . . .

### XXXIII

21 August, 1859

THE trifling indisposition has passed off. . . . But I learn that Miss Shaw has had a piece of fried pork sent up to the Prince. It is a mania with her to make him eat fat pork when he is ill. When he was six months old she had given it to him, and again to-day, in spite of my orders. . . .

## XXXIV

9 September, 1859

WE are just going out ; we shall go for a long drive with the Prince. Miss Shaw has persuaded the little fellow to ask General Rolin to take him to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and as every one here wants to be on good terms with Miss Shaw, the General has given way. The Court is a queer place. And what a singular training for this dear little fellow, so well endowed as he is ! Nature has done much for him. He has qualities of intelligence and heart of which the germ is already apparent. But they will spoil everything ; you would think there was a conspiracy to do so.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In confirmation of what I have written in this letter, I copy here the description of a scene which I wrote down a few moments after witnessing it. It displays some of the characteristics of the Prince when

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

. . . We have returned from Saint-Jean-de-Luz ; we had a charming excursion. The Prince enjoyed himself, laughing with all his might, partly thanks to your husband, who played with him all the way. This will give you an idea of the little chap's

quite a little child (he was then three or four years old) and also the flattery with which he was overwhelmed at this period.

A sailor's costume had been made for the Prince, in which he looked quaint and altogether charming. After lunch, being thus clad and extremely merry, he began to jump to the sound of the piano, and did so very well for his age, inventing little steps, and varying them, with such droll little gestures that it was all one could do not to laugh. Several did laugh, and admired him openly with great emphasis. Their Majesties encouraged and stimulated the Prince in this very innocent diversion. But His Highness grew excited, lost his head, and began to look for admiration and applause in the faces of all present. From this I conclude that he will be fond of showing himself to advantage, and will not disdain flattery ; perhaps will seek it.

His mother began to dance as well, wishing to show him some steps. She did so, so prettily and gracefully that the Emperor showed his pleasure by a hearty

## Jealousy

character : all along the road we kept on meeting women and children, running about and shouting, and among them a good many poor, to whom the General threw a few coins. He gave so many that at last he

caress. The Prince at once assumed an expression of gravity, and his dancing became less spontaneous. He evidently felt jealous, his instinct urging him to make himself the sole centre of admiration, and perhaps of affection.

The Empress, without noticing this change, wished to continue this little dancing lesson, and accordingly took M. de Riencourt's arm. Hardly had she commenced when the Prince flung himself upon her in order to stop her, and began to tug and tug at M. de Riencourt, until the latter fell to the ground, pretending to be the weaker. There the scene ended. But the Prince did not resume his play, and when some one spoke to him began to weep scalding tears ; it was impossible to console him. So this little fellow, already nervous and passionate, is jealous of his mother ; for that matter I have noticed as much on other occasions. Very naturally, as a matter of instinct, despite his tender age, the little Prince has always shown that he does not like any one but the Emperor to give his arm to the Empress. I should say he is jealous not so much of affection as authority, experience

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

grew weary and ceased. Some time later an urchin began to run barefoot after the carriage; it is the common custom to go barefoot here. The Prince saw this and said: "Why no boots?" (that is his way of pronouncing boots<sup>1</sup>). I replied, "Because he has no money to buy any." At once the little man turned to the General, and demanded: "Money." Not wanting to give him any, the General tried to divert his

having at a very early date put such ideas into his little head.

So our little Prince is already jealous of his authority and his position, and he loves and seeks personal admiration. If these two instincts are dealt with understandingly they may be turned into qualities; but they might become faults. Firstly, because of the flattery and admiration which surround him on every side, and secondly, on account of the weakness of his father, who loves the dear child so tenderly, and, I fear, will never have the strength to resist him; thirdly, on account of the character of his mother, who, more apt to resist the child than the Emperor, does not seem to have the power of resisting him in a sensible manner, which might be useful and efficacious.

<sup>1</sup> French, *botines* for *bottines*.



DRAWING BY THE PRINCE IMPERIAL, 1862.





## A Characteristic Incident

attention: "See there. Isn't that pretty? What a fine carriage!" and so forth. But no, he hadn't heard the end of it yet. The Prince replied politely, then pulled the General's sleeve, then cried to the postilion, "Slower!" and then again and again: "Money!" so that at last the General had to stop the carriage and give him money, which he threw to the boy; and when every one was settled again and we had forgotten the matter he turned to me with great solemnity and said, "Present to buy boats." He is three and a half, and this is just as it happened. Obstinate, persistent, good-hearted.

## XXXV

17 September, 1859

AS you know, we have the King of the Belgians here, who seems to be enjoying himself . . . much to the *ennui* of our Majesties. I tell you this in confidence ; I dare hardly trust it to paper ; for who knows what disasters might result from such indiscretion ? After all, it is an open secret ; we are bored at the villa. Yesterday I dined there. I was almost opposite the King and had a good view of his long and serious face. He has the appearance of a *perfect gentleman*. He honoured me with a gracious smile and a very amiable remark which I thought was to the effect that I was wonderfully well. The idea seemed so absurd that I replied, yes, the Prince Imperial was very well indeed. I would

208

## *Le Grand Monde*

rather speak of him than of myself and my flourishing health. . . . In this connection, I have been told of a remark made by an English lady in Biarritz which is rather amusing. Here everybody crowds to see the Prince as best they can. Some friends begged her, although she is rather a cross-grained person, to profit by an occasion when he was on the beach to approach and have a look at him. She came up, and turned back again, saying: "My good girls, what are you thinking of? It was hardly worth while to disturb me to see a pale, ugly child." . . . Now I will reply to your letter.

. . . There is some truth in what is being said of Biarritz, that it has never been so favoured by the presence of the *grand monde*. King Leopold, Prince Oldenburg, who has a suite of about fifteen persons, twenty or twenty-five Russian princes, the Prince of Monaco, and a crowd of notabilities, celebrities, and other sorts of deities now ornament the little town, which contains four

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

thousand foreigners. People lodge in mere holes, which are rented at fabulous prices. This does not prevent the place from being exceedingly dull, as we have had horrible weather; no one goes out, because it is raining, or because it is cold, or because it is too hot, &c., &c. There is indeed quite a well-furnished Turkish bazaar here; the wares plentiful, and dear in proportion'. . . .

## XXXVI

20 September, 1859

YOUR letter reached me last night, dear wife, as we were returning from an expedition by sea. The Imperial yacht, the *Aigle*, which their Majesties intend to use for such excursions, has come from Cherbourg expressly to be inspected. We have not failed to visit her. She is a large vessel, luxuriously fitted and equipped. We travelled some twenty miles in her, the weather being superb. No one was ill, and all went off capitally. We landed at Cape Breton, where the Emperor is having certain works executed with the idea of creating a harbour of refuge in this wretched Bay of Biscay, which vessels are forced to avoid, so inhospitable are its shores. At a little distance from the spot where we landed we found

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

the carriages, near the villages. Almost lost in the midst of a forest of pines and cork-oaks, planted with poplars and very fine plane-trees, this little village, with its moderately clean and tidy houses, is not without a certain charm, and is pleasing to look at. The road leading thence to Bayonne is very pleasant. It was the early evening ; the air was balmy with the odour of trees and flowers. At intervals the forest of cork-trees and pines receded in a clearing which revealed a glimpse of some pool whose waters reflected the last rays of the setting sun, together with the trees and the abundant aquatic plants upon its banks. We saw, too, a little rustic cottage, built on the edge of such a pond, with its blue smoke escaping from the chimney. The calm of evening, the slight vagueness of the lights and shadows of increasing twilight, the forest and its odours, the trampling of the horses, and the almost rhythmical tinkling of their bells, lulled me into one of those delightful reveries in which only **one** thing

## A Pleasant Road

is lacking to make happiness perfect: I wanted only my darling's hand pressing mine, and receiving my emotion and revealing hers.

Then came the deafening shouts, the hurrahs, the uproar and turmoil of the populations of Saint-Esprit and Bayonne, who, warned some hours earlier by the passing of the Imperial carriages, had improvised a reception, with illuminations, acclamations, gesticulations, and other performances, which woke me from my dream. Thus recalled to every-day life, I marvelled at the general enthusiasm, and at the same time discovered it was late, the night had come, and dinner was still far off.

## XXXVII

21 September, 1859

TO MY DAUGHTER CHRISTINE,

Why, yes, good Heavens, my dear Christolette, I have the happiness of seeing the Emperor, I have the happiness of speaking to him, and yesterday I had the happiness of taking a walk almost alone with him and his Pyrenean dog. He was a little unwell, our Emperor, and I have sent him to bed, this unhappy Emperor. The Empress and her friends had taken the opportunity of going for an outing, and as I was loafing in the garden, smoking my cigar, I heard myself hailed by a well-known voice, which cried at its loudest: "Hi, doctor, doctor!" It was the Emperor, who was disobeying orders, and who said to me as simply as the most ordinary of mortals:



## Shedding an Emperor's Blood

"Let's go for a walk." For he speaks just like any one else, you may take my word for it, and he has not always got his crown on his head. I believe his shouts attracted one of the aides, and the three of us scoured the fields and pastures, jumping the brooks, laughing, and talking, and even splashing about with the dog, who was our only escort. Aren't you fit to kill yourself, Christine, because you weren't there?

As a result of having disobeyed orders our Emperor is worse, and I had the honour, the great honour, of treating him and placing some wet cupping-glasses to the nape of his neck. Yes, O Christine, I have shed his sacred blood! I have just finished doing so, and as it is midnight I am going to finish this letter too.

## XXXVIII

24 *September*, 1859

. . . FOR the moment, my pretty, I am alone in the villa. The Empress has gone for a long steamer excursion, and will be back no one knows when. I refused to take part in it. On the whole I hardly get any pleasure out of it; I pass the time struggling against sea-sickness, which I always feel is on the point of attacking me. I decided to remain, especially as the Emperor is unwell, and did not care to go with the Empress. At present he has gone out for a drive. . . . I managed to resist the allurements of the Empress, who wanted me to go on the boat. She told me to come with her; but I stuck out that I preferred to remain, as the Emperor did so. And, as a matter of fact, they were not able to get back until two in the morning. They





ACHILLE FOULD.

## The Court at Sea

were stuck four hours in front of the town, tossing up and down in their cockle-shell, unable to land, but obliged finally to make for the Adour; all this time the Emperor came and went between Biarritz and the bar (it is half an hour's drive behind a good horse). In this way the night went by. It appears that all were sea-sick. I have not heard the details yet, as I went to bed half an hour before their arrival, and this morning they are all plunged in the profoundest sleep.

You can imagine what sort of an evening we spent while our gracious sovereign was tossing on the sea. We were a very small party at dinner: the Emperor, Mme. de Cadore, Mme. de Brancion, who scarcely ever goes out and is not exactly amusing—no one takes much notice of her—M. Fould the Minister, His Majesty's aide, and the excellent and original M. Mocquart. There were so few of us that I did not withdraw after dinner; with such a small number I felt I must be sociable. In a moment of

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

boredom I sat down to write Sophie the very useless letter she received; it was almost impossible to write seriously. About ten o'clock the boat signalled its arrival and made some preparations for landing the passengers. It was a dark night; we could only judge of what was going on by the light of the lanterns on the masts; that is, we could see two points of light rising, falling, and swaying. Evidently the vessel was having rather a rough time; then suddenly we saw the points of light making their way towards the Adour, and we lost sight of them. Thereupon Mme. de Brancion went off to bed, and the Emperor, who had gone to the harbour, jumped on horseback and made off towards the river. Half an hour later the vessel returned; she had not been able to cross the bar; whereupon M. de Tascher went off to bed and the Emperor returned from the Adour and set off again for Biarritz harbour. I remained on the terrace with Mme. de Cadore, anxiously following the movement of the lights. It

## A Late Return

was half-past twelve or thereabouts ; the vessel was still dancing up and down, neither advancing nor receding ; this might have lasted a long time, so Mme. de Cadore went off to bed, and I found myself alone on the terrace, smoking my cigar, and watching the dancing of the lights, to which the Emperor was replying by signals made from the top of the rocks by the harbour. It was half-past one ; the weather magnificent, agreeably mild ; the stars were shining their brightest ; the night was delightful, and I should have enjoyed it to the utmost if I had not known that the Emperor was running about the place at that hour and at a time when his health was far from being perfect. Well, the lights once more began to move, making at express speed for the bar. On his part the Emperor did the same. It was certain that they would be able to cross the bar, as the tide was rising . . . so, like the rest, I went to bed. Hardly had I laid my head on the pillow when I heard the noise of their return.

## XXXIX

2 October, 1859

. . . I AM writing absolute nonsense ; I am still in the *salon* ; people are singing and dancing beside me. I am interrupted by laughter in which I cannot help joining ; for Princess Metternich, wife of the Austrian Ambassador, is singing little Parisian songs, which are frivolous and broad—very broad ; <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Certainly our bourgeois circles, in their prudery, would never endure the sight of such peculiar freedom and frivolity on the part of our young women and girls. But I was told, in exoneration of this behaviour, which certainly shocked me a little although it amused me, that the education of the Austrian great ladies, quite unlike that of our young girls, allows them, in moments of relaxation and recreation, a liberty and a licence of a kind which in Austria have not the same significance as in France. With us such licence is somewhat plebeian ; but in Austria, it seems, the people know nothing of it. And in Austrian society ladies it is only an outward show, of which they divest



## Princess Metternich

and she is singing them in such an amusing style, so very French, so very much the *grisette*, that it is absolutely stupefying. Extraordinary young woman! And then, as there was talk of playing charades, I escaped to my bedroom, as I was hardly in the mood for such matters. You will ask why. Well, I am burning with impatience to be back with you all, and back at my own work again. Besides, I am worried and annoyed at the way things are going here. The Emperor is still unwell; I have not succeeded in relieving him, and besides being naturally worried on that account, I feel that I am losing prestige. themselves directly they return to every-day life. And I have since then, as a matter of fact, happened to see Princess Metternich for a few moments in her home life; and I was struck to find in her, not the crazy *grisette* singing risky songs, but the most accomplished great lady, serious in her manner, and wrapped up in her home and her children. Here once again was an instance of what all the world knows—that appearances are deceitful, and that one must not judge of character by the behaviour of a moment.

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

Yet I am very certain that my lack of success is the fault of the Emperor, who has not the strength of will to deprive himself of things he is fond of but which do him harm. This lack of strength and will-power and self-control depresses me on his account because I see him suffering and on my account because I see plainly that I am losing his confidence. They all have such droll ideas about medicine! So I am depressed; I feel incapable, good for nothing. I avoid their charades, their receptions, their excursions, and when I am alone I feel stupid, washed-out, lonely. . . . It is ridiculous, I know. . . . Oh well, I didn't escape after all. The Empress sent for me—I had to go and play at dumb charades. I have just been conscientiously playing the part of a professional thief. Everybody was very amusing, and they all had a good laugh. I have had a good grumble. All is for the best, except that I haven't had time to write you a longer letter. . . .

## XL

9 October, 1859

I WILL ask you first of all whether you know who is the Emperor's physician. You reply, picking up the almanack: physician-in-chief, M. Conneau; physicians-in-ordinary, MM. Rayer, Andral, &c. All this, my dear, is a mere matter of form; the Emperor's real physician, the doctor who gives him orders which he obeys, and in whom he appears to have every confidence, is M. Léon. You open your eyes: who is M. Léon? What is he? You have not heard of this great physician? Who is he? Where does he live? Is he to be found in Paris, and has he at least a good consultant's practice?

M. Léon is . . . His Majesty's valet-de-chambre. This man rules the Emperor, at

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

least in matters relating to his health ; I do not say completely and absolutely, but at least so far as the thing is feasible.

. . . And at the present moment I am in the bad books of this gentleman, whose existence even I did not suspect three days ago. I have often seen, on former occasions, something resembling a valet-de-chambre, who by common consent was never spoken of, so I had scarcely noticed him ; but to-day I have seen him at work. What coolness, what readiness, what impertinence, what certainty of himself and his position, and what absolute assertions, affirmations, in matters of medicine ! This man knows far more about medicine than your ignoramus of a husband. I bow before him.

(There are no letters from Biarritz for the years 1860, 1861, and 1862, as Dr. Barthez's family was then at Biarritz. The correspondence recommenced in 1863.)

## XLI

BIARRITZ, *September*, 1863

. . . AFTER lunch the Empress began one of those lively and spirited conversations which are one of her secrets, and which are often highly interesting. Hospitals were the subject, and the improvements to be made in them. You will understand that I was all eyes and ears, and that I did not fail to contribute my share. If you could have heard the spirited and striking manner in which she expounded her ideas, which were mostly excellent, though some were of less value; but they were always inspired by the best intentions; if you could have heard the emphasis with which she complained that she always sees her best inspirations distorted or destroyed by all sorts

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

of causes, and principally by avalanches of red-tape, or commissions appointed for the purpose, &c. ; if you could have heard all this you would say as I do : she is a good, charming, intelligent woman, who tries to do good and to be of use ; and if there is something to be regretted in certain sides of her character, it is impossible not to like this frank, impulsive nature, good and anxious to do good, and emitting, as it were, a shining fountain of kindly ideas, presented in lively and often picturesque language. But what is one to say to those who without knowing her have made up their minds and insist on judging her and giving an unfavourable verdict ?



THE EMPRESS PRESIDING AT A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.  
*From "The Illustrated London News," June 11, 1859.*





## XLII

10 September, 1863

I SHOULD have liked to give you a summary of a most interesting conversation which took place yesterday between the Empress and MM. Panizzi and Mérimée. It was about the Prince Napoleon. But there are things one may hear yet should not repeat. But what life, what movement, what brilliancy! What a delightful conversation! Nothing in our world could give you any idea of it. It lasted an hour and a half, and all that time the Empress held us under the spell of her lively, brilliant, picturesque conversation; telling us the most interesting things, retorting energetically to the calm and witty replies of her interlocutors. This is the second time in about eight days that I have been present at one of these tournaments of words, and I am still under the spell of this delightful conversation.

## XLIII

13 *September*, 1863

. . . THE Emperor returned to us yesterday, and I have had the pleasure of seeing Colonel Favé once more. I appreciate him better every day. He is so good, so kind, so firm, so conciliatory. He has a witty, observant mind; he skilfully analyses every subject he introduces, and finally, he is so well informed that with him the conversation never flags and is always interesting. Our circle is therefore complete, and there is some one for me to talk to and have a good time with. Colonel Favé and the Marquis de la Grange, two men of very different nature, but both good fellows: then the Prince's tutor, M. Monnier, who readily enters into long, interesting conversations; with him I can

228





SIR ANTHONY PANIZZI.

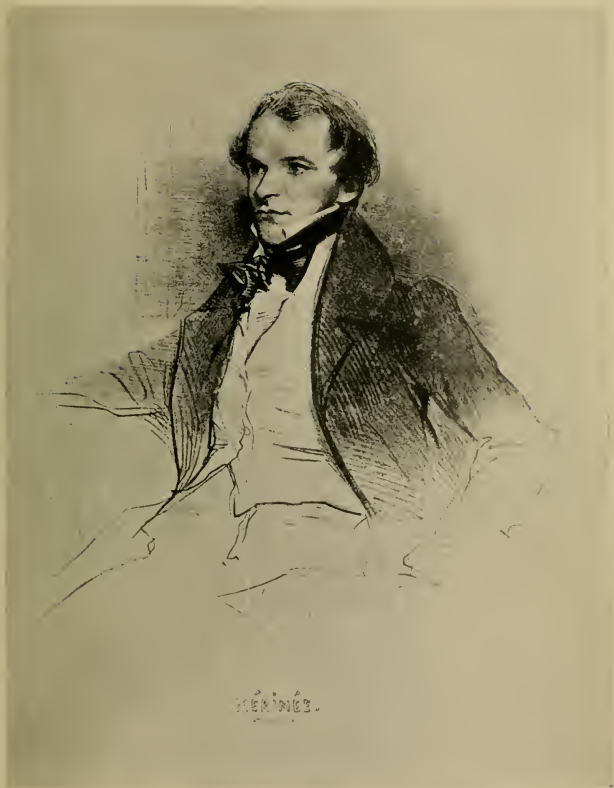
## Interesting Guests

talk history and philosophy and a little science of certain kinds ; he is a mine of information and ideas, which are not difficult to extract. There is also M. Panizzi, whose history is only partly known to me ; he was, I believe, forced to fly from Italy on account of trouble with the Austrians, and for years he was in England, where he was made director of the British Museum. He is a tall, stout, powerful man of sixty-five to sixty-eight ; his manners have a politeness which is as exquisite as it is simple and kindly ; he is witty and full of information, speaks French with some difficulty, and is yet very easy to talk to. To these add M. Mérimée, and you will understand that the time can easily be made to pass in an agreeable manner, as well as one fruitful for the mind.

## XLIV

*22 September, 1863*

AT lunch I was present at a very interesting conversation between the Emperor, the Empress, M. Mérimée, and some others, concerning colours, their arrangement, and their harmonies, as applied not to art but to industry. The Empress told us some very curious things about Hindoo, Persian, Turkish, and French colours. . . .



PROSPER MÉRIMÉE.





## XLV

24 September, 1863

THE villa has become rather deserted, and consequently a little depressing. The chief luminary of our circle has departed in the direction of the Upper Pyrenees ; that is, the Emperor has gone off on a three-days' excursion to visit the works which are being undertaken at Saint-Sauveur and other places. He has taken M. Favé with him. At the same time the Countess de Montijo, M. Mérimée, and M. Panizzi have gone. Our circle is thus very greatly reduced, and at first everything seemed very melancholy. It must be emphasised that the Emperor especially gives life to the whole villa, without any fuss and with the most perfect simplicity. I don't know if you can recall that portrait of the Emperor which I sent you at

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

the time of my first stay here ; you can always look it up among my letters. I scarcely know now what I said then, nor if I should have much to modify in my first appreciations. To-day I should tell you that it would be impossible to find a more equable, agreeable, kindly character than that of His Majesty. He is good and kind almost to the point of weakness. This no doubt astonishes you. Napoleon III. weak ! Yes, weak, and with a weakness which one might accompany with quite another word, were it not that in spite of this weakness one sees every moment the proof that behind this weak kindness there is a high intelligence and a lofty spirit. This weakly goodness has its source in the genuine affection he has for all those who surround him and are or have been of service to him. Never does a wounding or a contrary word, nor one in the least degree in the world disagreeable, fall from his lips ; and if the force of circumstances constrains him to commit the most trifling action which might displease



COUNTESS DE MONTIJO.



## Another Portrait

the very least of those about him, he commits it only as a last extremity, with regret and the greatest circumspection; so he often finds the means to accompany it by some agreeable action. He acts thus not by calculation, as those might suppose who judge without practical experience, but out of sheer good-heartedness; his heart is tender to weakness, and that in entire simplicity. There is no affectation in his private life, nothing of calculation. In his conversation his face frankly expresses what his words say. He talks simply, and affirms, interrogates, doubts, denies, contradicts, and approves as much by the expression of his features as by his words; and all this is always accompanied by a benevolent, simple, and sincere expression of countenance. Very often, however, he is more self-contained than at other times; he has then a rather melancholy or rather a preoccupied air. At such times he hardly speaks; he does not seem to notice what is going on around him. People are used to this and no notice is taken

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

of it in the general conversation or behaviour. But what plainly shows that his kindness proceeds from a tender heart is his obvious relations with the Empress and the Prince Imperial. It is in watching them and in speaking to them that his eyes tell his goodness and tenderness and also his weakness. . . .



THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.

To face p. 214.





## XLVI

24 *September*, 1863

THE day before yesterday I was for the first time present during a political conversation. It was in relation to the affairs of Poland ; a burning question, which at the moment is extremely critical, and occupying the minds of all. Each speaker displayed his character and way of thought in the most curious and interesting manner ; one discussing the question seriously, and expressing his ideas with deliberation and not without passion ; another mingling serious reflections with witty and bantering sallies ; a third speaking so violently and congesting his brain to such an extent that he could hardly express himself. It was, I can assure you, very curious and interesting, both in matter and in manner, and also for the variety of opinions expressed. What struck me most

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

was the fact that he who most warmly took the part of the Poles and wished us to fling ourselves into a war with Russia was also precisely the one who demanded that the Pope should be removed from Rome and established in Constantinople . . . he who most warmly took the part of Russia and wanted to see the Poles exterminated was precisely he who most emphatically demanded the absolute maintenance of the Holy Father in his Italian possessions. On the whole, the dominant opinion was that the horrible massacres of the Polish people must be stopped ; but that we could not seriously throw ourselves into the business without being strongly supported by sufficient alliances. During the whole of this conversation the Empress said not a word ; contrary to her usual custom, she listened without speaking, drawing her needle very steadily through her tapestry ; and when she was asked to give her opinion she replied : “ I talk a great deal about past events, but never of contemporary matters ” ;

## Playing the Doctor

and she was as good as her word. The Emperor was absent.

Would you like a specimen of the manner in which I play the doctor here? The Empress thought fit the other day to give her feet a really thorough soaking. She lunched without changing her shoes, and after lunch she did not want to disturb her people, who were at their meal. She therefore kept her wet shoes on and caught a superb cold, which started in the nose and travelled down to the throat, and finally to the bronchial tubes. I managed with some difficulty to get her to give up her sea-bathing ; but there was some talk of a boating trip up the Nive. The river had to be reached in an open carriage, and the party were to spend two good hours on the water, and in the evening to return in an open carriage from Bayonne to Biarritz ; after sunset, which was hardly prudent. All begged Her Majesty to postpone the trip ; but in vain.

I begged and prayed her, but also in

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

vain ; she would keep to the promise she had made to the Princess Anna. Then I went up to her, and looking at her with my best mocking look, with which she is familiar, I told her : “ I don't approve of this trip ; I forbid it.” She repaid me my scornful expression, and accompanied it with a gesture that little gutter-boys are familiar with, and did not give way. Thereupon we lunched. After lunch fresh entreaties, remonstrances on the part of all, and fresh resistance. Then I resumed my mocking look and cried : “ Let us all cast ourselves at Her Majesty's sacred feet ! ” And I was the first to suit the action to the word, pulling a comical face as I did so. She began to laugh, but defied us all, particularly me, whom she raised from the ground, administering a dainty little smack. And that is how I play the doctor in this somewhat eccentric world.

I had a soothing draught made up which I took to one of the gentlemen who would be in the Empress's boat, begging him to



THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE.  
*From a photograph taken about 1865.*



## A Wilful Patient

get her to take it during the trip. (I expect it was simply thrown in the river.) I was in the third boat, well behind that in which was the Empress, and when it seemed to me that the trip had lasted long enough I hailed the boat in front of mine and asked that the Empress should be told that I asked that the party should return to Biarritz. The reply was something which was equivalent to an emphatic *zut!* However, a few minutes later they turned round, and we returned before dinner-time. And that is how my orders get obeyed. It is true that the Emperor is away; but if he had been there? It is probable that things would have been the same.

## XLVII

29 September, 1863

I AM writing this letter shortly after their Majesties, accompanied by an architect, have selected the site of a chapel which is to be built in pursuance of a vow made by the Empress on I don't know what occasion. It is impossible not to remark the number of foundations of this sort for which their Majesties are responsible. In this district alone I know of two in Biarritz, one at Solferino, one at Behobie, and one near Saint-Sauveur in the Pyrenees. I heard of the last from the Emperor at the time of his return from the little trip which he has just made. He looked so pleased when he spoke of the happy results of the trip that it was a pleasure to hear him. It is curious to see how strongly this man has the instinct of

240





THE EMPEROR AND THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.

To face p. 240.



## The Emperor's Benevolence

practical well-doing and the satisfaction he feels in doing good incessantly and wherever he goes. I have often heard it said that he acts thus out of policy; that it is in his interest to do so; that his object is to win the affection of the people. . . . If it were so I should not see any great harm in it. It is in the interest of all sovereigns to promote the welfare of their subjects. If he has realised that, he has thereby a great advantage over those sovereigns who have slumbered in the royal or Imperial purple without troubling about the needs of their people. And after all the good is done and remains. But I deny that personal interest is the only or even the chief object of the Emperor in all the good he performs. I believe it is a characteristic which we should love and admire as we admire the genius of great men or the beauty of women. It is apparent in every word the Emperor speaks, and I had fresh proof of it in the conversation of which I spoke just now. After the account of the trip the conversation turned on the

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

best manner of doing good ; the Emperor detailed his methods and line of conduct.

The Empress was making comments and objections, and stating which means she thought the best, and everybody put in a word. The Emperor spoke rather oftener than the others, but without boasting ; with such simplicity and absence of rehearsal that it was impossible to see anything more than the love of public welfare for the sake of the public. And in all this he did not even seem to imagine that he was fulfilling a duty ; he was simply following his inclination.

The more I see this man the more closely I study him and the more attached I grow. I have looked for his worse side in everyday life and I have not found it. I could not perhaps say as much of the Empress. I have often praised her to you and told you how highly I think of her ; but I know where she is lacking. With the Emperor the evil, if there is any, is so hidden that I cannot point to it ; his only fault, if it is one, is

## A Good Man

that his kindness errs to the verge of weakness. Of course it is of the private man I speak. So many passions surround him, and I am such a stranger to politics, that I cannot judge him from another point of view ; he will be approved by some, blamed by others, and detested by many for his political actions. I leave this province alone, as I know nothing about it. As a private individual, as a man in his own home, he reveals many weaknesses, some errors founded on ignorance of certain things, and a few prejudices ; this is the result of his humanity and his natural imperfection ; it could not be otherwise, for no one is perfect. But this does not in the least affect what I have said elsewhere. He may make mistakes, but there is no evil in him.

(There are no letters for the year 1864, the doctor's family being at Biarritz.)

## XLVIII

11 *September*, 1865

WE are in a great state of excitement. We are about to receive a visit from the Queen of Spain, her husband, her son, the Prince of the Asturias, whose father . . . but away with gossip! We are going to wear uniform. Dinner of thirty-six covers in a dining-room too small for them. Fireworks on the beach, with a possibility of setting fire to the bathing establishment. Very interesting conversation between Spaniards who don't know a word of French and Frenchmen who don't speak a word of Spanish. In short, it will be delightful. My dear wife, you sometimes complain of the bother caused you by the arrival of a few occasional guests. But if you saw the business it entails here you would be amazed. It is a regular



ISABELLA II., QUEEN OF SPAIN.





## Preparations

cabinet council that has to be assembled in order to settle all the necessary preparations for such a reception, of which all the details have to be foreseen, discussed, and arranged; aides-de-camp, chamberlains, squires, prefect of the palace, *maréchal des logis*, all have a mass of details to look after, while remembering contradictory orders which are given in one sense in the morning and another at night, so that I don't know how they manage to obey them all. Well, my next letter will tell you how they managed.

## XLIX

12 September, 1865

WELL, the first act of the royal reception has been played. I have seen the Queen of Spain ; she is not pretty ; she is even ugly ; and yet I thought her even uglier than she is. As for seeing the Bourbon in her face or figure, you can't ; either she does not belong to that handsome family or the race has greatly changed during its sojourn in Spain. She is enormous ; *enceinte*, very full in the girdle ; the seventh month, they say. The nose turns up, the eyes are small, the lips thick and sickly, yet with all that there is something agreeable in her smile. As for the King of Spain, what can one say of him, except in commiseration ? He is small, stunted, skinny, his voice thin and artificial ; he goes for nothing in his kingdom, has no

246



MARSHAL O'DONNELL, DUKE OF TETUAN.



## The Queen of Spain

employment, no authority, does nothing.  
. . . I will spare you all the tittle-tattle I  
have heard. . . .

For the rest, the reception was well  
managed and even magnificent.

Among the great personages whom I was  
interested to see was the Marshal O'Donnell,  
Duke of Tetuan, who looks rather less of a  
Spaniard than I do. He is a tall man with  
fair hair, whitened by age, with blue eyes,  
and a good-natured, smiling, agreeable  
face, with no apparent malice in it. All  
the rest had markedly Spanish features,  
excepting perhaps one of the Ministers,  
Señor Calderon, short, dried-up, and thin,  
with an expression sparkling with wit;  
the nose almost straight, the chin pro-  
minent, the forehead well shaped; a type  
of face almost English and an expres-  
sion entirely French. They all went  
for a nice excursion to Bayonne; cannon  
were fired; they returned here to pass an  
hour in dressing, and at eight the dinner  
commenced. It was very fine, very interest-

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

ing, and a splendid sight. The table was excellently set out; the mixture of flowers and ornaments and rich toilets was very striking; a good band from time to time played airs from Rossini's "Roland at Roncesvalles"—altogether a very good feed; indeed, it was all worth seeing, hearing, and eating. After dinner a fine display of fireworks; a set-piece fresh from Paris with its author, Ruggieri. No conflagration resulted, no bombs fell on anybody's head, and at last the departure took place by the light of torches and Bengal fires. Their Majesties of Spain were reconducted as far as the Negress railway station; and the comedy being over we returned and went to bed.

## L

1 October, 1865

I HAVE at last discovered that the villa is situated as regards the points of the compass almost exactly like our pavilion at Issy. The sun sets a little to the left ; the Great Bear shows in front a little to the right ; the polar star, too, is above and a little to the right ; and in thinking of this common position I fall a-dreaming, and borne by Pegasus, or the Great Bear, or imagination, I think for a moment that I am at Issy, and I dream of all my dear ones so long and so plainly that I sometimes fancy I am close to you and shall see you on entering the *salon*. Once especially the illusion was complete. While I was conversing with myself the sound of a piano fell upon my ear and I seemed to recognise Christine's

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

touch. Full of this dream, I entered and saw Mme. de la Bédoyère playing for herself and a few others. She has really something of Christine's touch, a little spoiled, however, by a trace of hardness. I sat close to the piano ; it was the only time since I left Issy that my ears have helped my other senses to delight me.

This evening I was struck by the distribution of the furniture and the people in the room ; there was something that recalled the charming engraving representing the *salon* of the Prince de Conti. The large *salon* of the villa has been transformed. Instead of the *perse* that eight years of use had faded they have hung old tapestries representing the story of Don Quixote ; the furniture is covered with a pretty old tapestry which must be Beauvais. In the centre, about a round table, were the Empress, her ladies, and some gentlemen ; the ladies working, the gentlemen all playing at various games and chatting at the same time ; at the end, at a big square



## A Charming Picture

table, the Emperor was showing several persons his maps of France for the history of Cæsar ; in a corner Mme. de la Bédoyère, surrounded by a few gentlemen, was making music ; at the other end of the *salon* some were taking refreshments, while others were reading the papers. There was a busy and varied peace ; things and people were well placed ; each had a natural and individual pose, and all was arranged so well that I seemed for a moment to be looking at some charming picture, which I much regretted could not be painted.

## LI

9 October, 1865

AMONG the distinguished foreigners whom we have here is M. Bismarck. He came to the villa yesterday and chatted a long while with the Emperor. . . . M. Mérimée began to make remarks concerning this conversation, and turning to Mme. de la Bédoyère, who has lived in Prussia, began to say that M. Bismarck watched her a great deal, that he always has his eyes fixed upon her, that this must certainly interfere in his conversation with the Emperor, and other nonsense of the same stamp. Then he went to his room and drew M. Bismarck's portrait on a sheet of cardboard. . . . He has a certain talent for painting and seizes a likeness excellently. This portrait, which was life-size, was polished off in a couple of hours; it was really a remarkable likeness; the illusion was extraordinary. This



PRINCE BISMARCK.  
*By Franz von Lenbach.*



## A Practical Joke

done, he went into Mme. de la Bédoyère's room, placed the portrait in her bed, the head lying on the pillow, and set an open book beside it, as though the owner of the head were reading. Then he went down to dinner. He warned the Emperor, and during the evening the conversation was brought round to M. Bismarck. "Ah," said the Emperor, "it is incredible what attention he pays you, Mme. de la Bédoyère; we have had a mixed conversation, politics combined with remarks concerning you; you have certainly made a conquest of him." "He is," added M. Mérimée, "a man you ought to beware of, and not to trust; he speaks little, but he has the reputation of being a most audacious man."

The conversation continued in this strain for some time; then came bedtime, and all retired. Mme. de la Bédoyère's room opens into a long corridor which is open at either end. Their Majesties, after saying good-night, crept along a side corridor to the end of this; we were coming along at

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

the other end, letting Mme. de la Bédoyère pass us ; she entered her room bravely enough, but very soon came rushing out again, and ran into Mme. de Lourmel's room crying : " My dear, there is a man in my bed ! " The latter lady went forward, and burst out laughing, and we all turned up to contemplate the audacious M. de B. in the young lady's bed—she laughing as heartily as we. The complement of the affair is this : we learned that during dinner the chambermaid, going into her mistress's room, and seeing this head, which she did not recognise, ran away, in confusion, and went in search of another maid, to whom she said : " Mon Dieu ! I don't know what is up, but there's a man in Madame's bed, but it isn't M. de la Bédoyère." There was a pretty to-do, as you can imagine ; it set us all off laughing again. . . .

You will be no more disposed than I to believe that Mme. de la Bédoyère was really deceived by this pleasantry, nor the maid either ; nor the chucklers below stairs.



DR. BARTHEZ.

To face p. 254.





LETTER WRITTEN BY DR. BARTHEZ TO  
HIS DAUGHTER ON THE NEWS OF THE  
DEATH OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL

*Monday*

THANKS for your kind letter, my dear, dear daughter. Yes, indeed, I am terribly upset ; I can hardly realise this new sorrow, this dreadful misfortune. I see always in my mind's eye that poor young body, of which I took such thought and care, and I see it pierced with seventeen assegai-stabs, with one of the eyes battered in, stripped of all but his cross and medal, which were hung round his neck. This picture will not leave me, and it rends my heart. And then I think of his mother, who, in spite of a few failings, was always actuated by such good intentions, and guided by so fine an intelligence ; so happy formerly, and to-day husbandless and

## Empress Eugénie and her Circle

childless. You of all people can understand the sufferings of this mother, and her increasing desolation and solitude.

And then I cannot help thinking of my country. I know that the ways of God are hidden from our eyes, and that in His sovereign wisdom He chooses the best means to lead us to Him and to save our unhappy France. But I knew the serious qualities of my young Prince, and his Christian mind and training, and I hoped he would be the instrument of the salvation of France. God has willed otherwise.

I am deeply grieved, my dear child, and I thank you tenderly for so fully understanding and sharing my sorrow.

I kiss you (*Je t'embrasse*).

E. BARTHEZ.

## INDEX

- ADOUR, the, river, 72-3 ; bar of, 74 ; high seas on bar, 76 ; excursion on, 76 ; excursion to, 168 ; trouble in landing in, 218
- Aigle*, the Imperial yacht, 211
- Albe, Duc d', 147
- Albe, Duchesse d', 147, 159
- Alexander, Emperor, 38
- Andral, Dr., 223
- Anna, Princess Murat, 238
- Asturias, Prince of the, 244
- BARTHEZ, DR., appointed physician-in-ordinary to the Prince Imperial, 11-13 ; presented to their Majesties, 14-15 ; required to leave hospital in case of epidemic, 42-3 ; sent for to attend the Prince at Biarritz, 44 ; his life at Biarritz, 62-7 ; a curious adventure, 86-7 ; his position at Biarritz, 96-7 ; 136-7 ; his opinion of Home, 139-42 ; his position improves, 153-4 ; attends Home, 165-6 ; difficulties of his position, 221-2 ; letter on the death of the Prince, 255
- Bassano, Duchesse de, 46
- Bayonne, 54, 72, 121 ; bull-fights at, 94, 132, 213
- Bédoyère, Mme. de la, 49, 50, 149, 150, 159, 250-2 ; portrait of, 252-4
- Belgians, King of the, 208-9
- Biarritz, journey to, mooted, 12 ; journey to, 47-9 ; company in train, 50 ; Court arrives at, 55 ; scenery, 56 ; the château, 62 ; the park, 63-5 ; storm at, 123 ; journey to, 200
- Bidache, excursion to, 146
- Bizot, Mme., under-governess, 31
- Bordeaux, 52-3
- Boucan, 72, 74
- Bouls-rimés*, 169
- Briancon, Mme. de, governess, 17, 19, 23, 49, 50, 201, 217, 218
- Bruat, Admiral, 31
- Bruat, Mme., governess of the royal children, 31

# Index

Bulls, 93 ; docility of, with oxen, 94 ; 116

Bull-fights, the Empress's fondness of, 84-5 ; 93-4 ; a burlesque bull-fight, 95 ; a Landaise bull-fight, 95 ; the Empress's love of, explained, 115-16 ; 132-3

CADORE, Mme. de, 217-19

Cadore, Marquis de, 48, 50

Calderon, Señor, 207

Cap Breton, harbour projected at, 211

Cestac, Abbé, 77

Chapels erected by Emperor, 240-1

Coligny, H.I.M.S., the, 192

Conneau, Dr., 11-14, 24-5, 30, 34, 39, 41, 45-6, 128-9, 223

Corvisart, Dr., 11, 20, 21

Crinoline, the, 103-4

EMPEROR, the, *see* Napoleon III.

Empress, the, *see* Eugénie

Epidemics, nervousness concerning, 42-3

Eugénie, Empress, the, 11-15 ; appearance of, 16 ; determination of, 21 ; health and temperament, 30 ; dress, 34-36 ; an inexperienced mother, 37 ; 40, 41 ; on the journey to Biarritz, 30-2 ; graciousness, 53, 66, 74 ; incident of

sick child, 75-6 ; love of bull-fights, 84-5 ; a trick played on the doctor, 87-8 ; love of dancing, 89 ; impulsiveness, 99 ; good looks, 99-100 ; embarrasses the doctor with her charms, 101 ; dress, 102-3 ; on the crinoline or "cage," 103-4 ; hair, 104, 105 ; in society, 106 ; in private life, 107 ; love of bull-fighting, 109 ; occasional injustice of, 110-11 ; fond of boisterous games, 112-13 ; effects of Spanish training, 114-16 ; as mother, 117-18 ; no faith in doctors, 119 ; 125 ; childlike character, 126 ; credulity, 127 ; 128-9 ; 131 ; less attracted by bull-fights, 132-3 ; health of, 135 ; faith in Home, 138-9 ; 180 ; amusing telegraphic correspondence with Emperor, 162-63 ; refuses to believe Home a trickster, 167 ; delight in Spanish songs and dances, 180 ; 181-2 ; a scene with the Prince, 204-5 ; unable to land on return from excursion, 216-19 ; conversation, 225-7 ; 236 ; a wilful patient, 239 ; 240-2

Excursions, on the Adour, 76, 168, 218 ; to Bidache, 146 ; to Grammont, 146-8 ; to Pas de

# Index

- Roland, 173 ; to a smugglers' cave, 175-82 ; to Fontarabia, 182-3 ; to San Sebastien, 192-94 ; to Loyola, 196-8 ; on the Nive, 237-9
- FAISANS, ILE DES, 183
- Favé, M., 170, 227
- Floating batteries, 38
- Floods, 38
- Fontarabia, excursion to, 183-8 ; verses upon the voyage to, 187-91
- Fould, M., 217
- GRAMMONT, excursion to, 146-8
- HOME, the famous medium, 137 ; the Empress's faith in, 138 ; appearance, 138-9 ; a *séance*, 139-40 ; Dr. Barthez' opinion of, 142 ; detected in fraud, 164 ; takes to his bed, 165 ; supposed to be dying, 165 ; Dr. Barthez sent for, 165-6, 169
- IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, SAINT, 196 ; seminary of, 196-7
- Ile, M. Morio de l', *see* Morio
- JUAN, DON, 147-8, 151
- KRONSTADT, 38
- LA GRANGE, M. de, 44-5, 47, 50, 131, 155, 228
- Landes, the, 53
- Léon, M., the Emperor's valet, 223-4
- Lourmel, General de, death of, in Crimea, 56
- Lourmel, Mme. de, 49, 50, 56, 142, 254
- Loyola, excursion to, 192-6
- MÉRIMÉE, PROSPER, 227, 229, 252 ; plays a practical joke on Mme. de la Bédoyère, 252-4
- Metternich, Princess, 220-1
- Michel, M., the " King of Smugglers," visited by the Court, 176-7
- Mocquard, M., his verses, 170-1 ; 217
- Monaco, Prince of, 209
- Monnier, M., 228
- Montebello, Mme. de, 145-8 ; portrait of, 151-3, 155, 160-1, 170
- Morio de l'Ile, M., detects Home in fraud, 164, 166
- Moscow, Prince of, 170
- Murat, Prince, 170
- Murat, Princess (Anna), 170
- NAPOLEON III., 12, 13 ; his care of the Prince's health, 14 ; a troublesome patient, 30 ; credulity, 31, 39 ; 40 ; appearance and manners, 41, 47, 50 ;

# Index

- conversation of, 51, 59, 66 ;  
68, 70, 71 ; his country drives,  
72, 74, 76 ; portrait of, 78-82 ;  
occupations, 83, 84-5 ; affec-  
tion for Empress, 86-6 ;  
morality, 86 ; considerateness,  
87-8 ; a jovial dancer, 89 ;  
his singing and reading, 89,  
90 ; 90-1 ; habits at Biarritz,  
92 ; expression and character,  
98 ; 103 ; joins in games,  
113 ; affection for Empress  
and child, 117 ; credulity,  
119 ; charity, 121 ; 123-5 ; 127 ;  
lack of confidence in doctors,  
128 ; 129 ; faith in Home's  
performances, 163, 168-9 ; as  
composer, 170 ; 217-19, 221-2 ;  
227 ; character, 231-4 ; 240 ;  
goodness of heart, 241-3,  
251-4
- O'DONNELL, MARSHAL, 247  
Oldenburg, Prince, 209
- PANIZZI, 227-29  
Pas de Roland, excursion to,  
173  
*Pelican*, H.I.M.S., 185-6 ; verses  
upon voyage in, 186-92  
Poëze, Mme. de la, 145, 147,  
156-7 ; portrait of, 157-8  
Poëze, M. de la, 175  
Prince Imperial, the, 11-14 ;  
health and appearance, 17-  
18 ; habits and diet, 19 ;
- appearance, 20 ; flattery of,  
23-4 ; childish ailments, 26 ;  
diet, 26-7 ; toilet of, 29 ; sweet  
temper, 31 ; foolish treat-  
ment of, 32-3 ; toilet of, 34-  
6 ; health of, 40, 117-18 ; in-  
disposed, 128-30 ; health,  
135, 198-9 ; over-excited by  
premature social functions,  
199 ; 200-1 ; early jealousy,  
204-8 ; generosity, 205-8 ;  
death of, 255-6  
Pyrenees, 173-4 ; excursion to  
cave in, 175-82
- RAYER, DR., 23, 129, 130, 142,  
213  
Richemont, M. de, 48, 50  
Riencourt, M. de, 175, 205  
Rolin, General, 45, 86, 203-7,  
Rome, King of, 13
- SAINT-CLOUD, 14 ; park of, 18 ;  
an early visit, 45  
St. Jean de Luz, excursion to,  
203  
San Sebastien, 96 ; excursion to,  
192-4  
Sclafani, Countess, 197  
Shaw, Miss, the Prince's nurse,  
17, 19 ; determined character  
of, 28-9, 34-6 ; 118, 130, 200-  
201 ; mania for fried pork,  
202 ; 203  
Smugglers' cave, 178-80  
Smuggling, 176-7

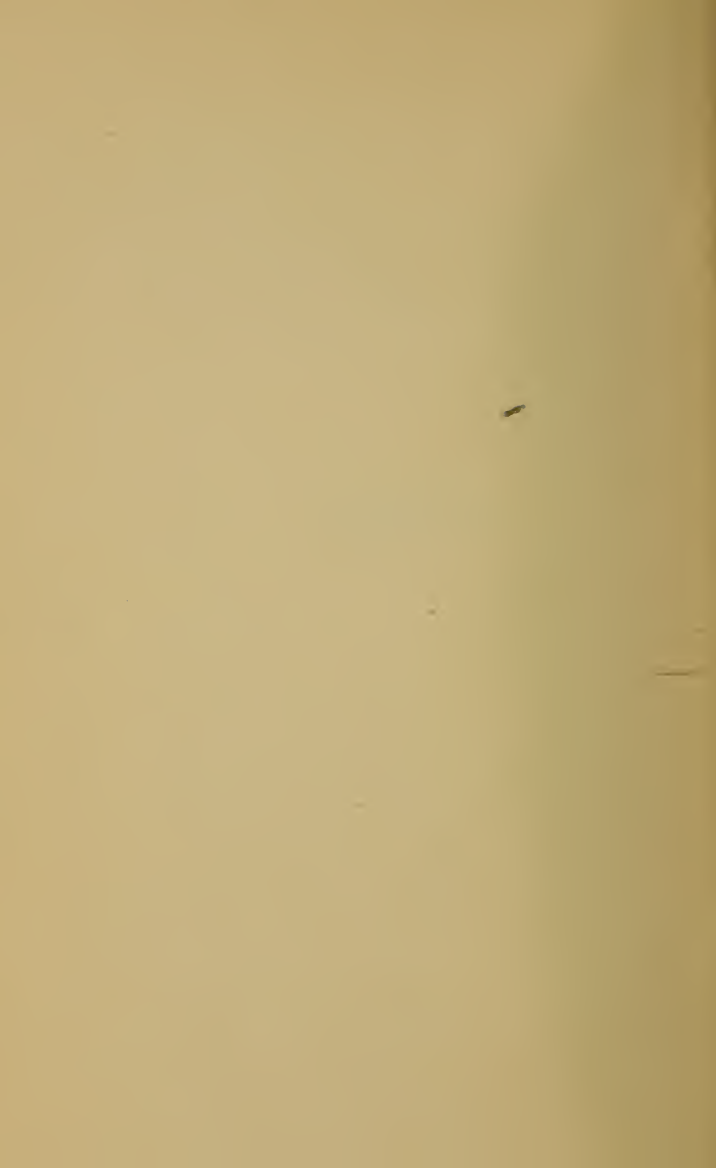
# Index

- Spain, King of, 244-8  
Spain, Queen of, 244-8  
Spiritualism, 141-2
- TASCHER DE LA PAGERIE,  
COMTE, 47, 50, 218
- Teeth, the Emperor on, 69-70  
Tetuan, Duke of, *see* O'Donnell  
Toilet, the Imperial, 29-34  
Train, the Imperial, 46-9  
Tuileries, the, 14
- VALESKI, M. AND MME., 145, 159  
Valet, difficulties respecting a,  
44-6  
Villa Eugénie, the, 57-61 ; balls  
at, 68-9, 249-50
- WALESKA, *see* VALESKI  
Wet-nurse, the, 19, 22, 26, 33,  
36, 130
- ZUMAYA, excursion to, 194

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