



The Empress Eugénie, painted by Claude Marie Dubufe in 1854

**EMPRESS EUGENIE:
HER SECRET REVEALED
By Joyce Cartlidge**

Published by Magnum Opus Press

ISBN 9781906402020

Released 7th June 2008

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Introduction

'I should have liked to have gone to ... the Empress's funeral. I suppose that very few people are alive today who saw her in her great days at the Tuileries. And I did. It was during my last Eton holidays, and I was asked to the last ball she gave before the waves closed over her splendour. She was radiant, without a jewel of any kind.

'Everyone else was emblazoned. The Emperor, half stupefied with morphia, inscrutable eyed, and mightily unimpressive. The Tuileries – now disappeared – gorgeous and crammed with the smartest and some beautiful women.

'The last time I saw the Empress was at the Savoy, lunching in the restaurant with some friends who had come over from France. She was an old woman, but all the beautiful lines of head and shoulders were still discernible. Her rise and fall are a romance quite unparalleled in history even in the short career of Ann Boleyn.'

– Letter to 'L.B.' from Viscount Esher, 14th July 1920¹

'Outside the Imperial entourage very little, probably nothing, is known of Her Majesty's private affairs. The Administer General, Mons Pietri, is a monument of discretion.'

– Edward Legge, The Empress Eugénie and Her Son (1910)²

The Paris fashion house of Worth is still a familiar name, but how many remember Eugénie, the beautiful red-haired and Spanish-born Empress of the French, wife of Napoleon III, whose patronage made the Lincolnshire lad Charles Frederick Worth rich and famous? During the brief years of the glorious Second Empire and its extravagant court, lady guests of the Im-

perial couple were expected to change their dresses three times a day, and to wear no gown more than once during their stay.

After the fall of Napoleon, Eugénie, who became an intimate friend of Queen Victoria, spent the final fifty years of her long life in English exile, and travelling and sailing in her yacht, *The Thistle*. After 1891, she wintered in the house overlooking the sea that she had built on Cap Martin, a peninsula near Menton on the French Riviera.

She died on 11th July 1920 at the age of ninety-four whilst on a visit to her great-nephew the 17th Duque de Alba at his home the Liria Palace in Madrid. Her remains were brought back to England and interred in the Imperial Mausoleum at St Mary's Abbey which she had built very close to her home, Farnborough Hill, in Hampshire. She lies in the crypt with her husband the Emperor, who died in 1873, and with her son, the Prince Imperial, who was killed in the Zulu wars in 1879. At her funeral, Abbot Cabrol, referring to her long life, said 'a book would not hold it all', continuing, 'I hope that book will be written with all the scrupulous accuracy that history demands today.'³

Eugénie seems to have hoped for the opposite, and did her best to thwart any chance of 'scrupulous accuracy' in her chroniclers.

* * *

On 10th October 1895, at Abergeldie Castle on the Balmoral estate in Scotland, Sir James Reid, Physician to Queen Victoria, asked the Empress Eugénie if she had kept a diary. She replied, 'It is far better I did not keep a diary; there are things I could not have written down.'⁴

In January of 1910 she sent a letter to *The Times*,

stating that she had not written and never would write her memoirs. She reiterated this instruction in her will, requesting her executors to prosecute if any such memoirs appeared in her name.

When the author Lucien Daudet asked the Empress whether she would authorise him to write a book about her, she answered, 'Impossible! How could you write about me without giving new historical information, and as you know I always refuse permission for that. Surely you could not write without making me speak.' Nevertheless he wrote his book *L'inconnue* in 1911, and it is recorded that 'not a phrase displeased her'.⁵

However, she told Dame Ethyl Smyth that she would not comment on her biographies because 'nearly every statement was wrong'.⁶ Smyth also asked Eugénie why she did not write her memoirs. The Empress replied cryptically, saying, 'People in a moment of infidelity failed you, who could show them up, but memoirs useless if this was not done'. In this strangely constructed reply Eugénie seems to be saying that she could not write her life story because she would have to expose some person or persons who had let her down, and unless she did so the memoirs would be worthless. Perhaps such a 'moment of infidelity' sparked her cynical words as quoted by Nancy N. Barker: 'It is rare in life not to experience deceptions, and it is always a cause of suffering to form attachments on this earth.'⁷

Ernest Alfred Vizetelly, a gossipy historical writer who called himself '*Le petit homme rouge*' ('the little red man') and who knew the Empress during her time in Paris, stated that 'she preferred to cast a veil over the past'⁸.

Harold Kurtz, the biographer of the Empress, told of his enquiries on a visit to her home when he started his researches: 'Sir Alan Lascelles ... compiled an inventory of papers found at Farnborough [the Empress's house] in

1920. When Captain Lascelles first went to Farnborough in 1920, Bristol, the Empress's old major-domo warned him that he was unlikely to find much — the Empress had spent three days in 1919 burning papers!⁹

Eugénie's habit of destroying papers was of long standing. Her turn of the century biographer Clara Tschudi reports that 'even after her hasty flight [from Paris in 1870] not a thing was discovered that could compromise her ... the Empress of the French had always been careful of her reputation, for it is perfectly certain that she would have met with no mercy if it had been possible to sully her fair name.'¹⁰

Why such need for secrecy, considering her flamboyant lifestyle both as a young girl and when she became Empress of the French?

An interesting snippet, from the memoirs of Princess Caroline Murat, a contemporary of the Empress: 'When Gambetto Rockfort and members of the Government of National Defence searched the Tuileries [September 1870] they found a photograph of a handsome young man. Written on the back in Spanish — One must learn to love in secret.'¹¹

* * *

My curiosity about the Empress Eugénie came about indirectly.

My husband Derek had never been able to tell me why his late father had Pemberton as a third Christian name. One day in my presence, he asked his father's elder brother Robert, a matter-of-fact man, who was a Garrison Engineer with the Royal Engineers stationed at Bicester near Oxford. Uncle Bob replied obliquely, saying that the Pembertons were supposed to be descended from the Empress Eugénie, and that he once made the

mistake of mentioning this at school. Intrigued, I determined to ask more when I had researched this Empress, but Robert died shortly after and so my opportunity was lost. This family connection had apparently been a well-guarded secret, as my husband had never before heard it mentioned, although his father was alive until he was fifteen years old.

Uncle Bob's widow Jean had been very close to her father-in-law, keeping house for him for some years when he was a widower and her husband was serving in Singapore. Aunt Jean was reluctant to be drawn on the subject, saying only that the descent was 'through the mother, she was Spanish'. On a later occasion she warned me to 'be wary', adding that 'Bob was always evasive about the Pembertons'.

It is probable that Robert Cartlidge's black hair and Spanish appearance had led him to ask questions.

For the following two decades I was too busy with the current generation of Cartlidges to have very much time for family history, but I gained background knowledge by reading about the Empress and her period. Eugénie, unlike many other royal or aristocratic ladies of her time, did not write her memoirs. A reviewer of Kurtz's 1964 biography *The Empress Eugénie* asked, 'What was the Empress Eugénie's secret?'

Did I have the answer? When my children had grown I was able to concentrate on the mystery, believing that with the experience I now had in family history research I would quickly disprove this supposed descent from Eugénie. How wrong I proved to be! The more I discovered, the more probable the connection seemed to be. Not so much through available evidence but the through the unwitting testimony of missing records, notably at periods which were critical to my research.

Aunt Jean Cartlidge's remark that 'the mother' was

Spanish proved a red herring. My Pemberton-Carlidge family history research concentrated on attempting to discover the origins of my husband's grandmother, Susan Helen Taylor, known to be a schoolmistress. Her birth was not registered and I came to a halt. After much research, I concluded that she was probably the illegitimate daughter of her 'father's' unmarried sister, also a Susan Helen Taylor. Her teaching records show that she added Susan to her name at the time of her supposed father's death, perhaps because at that time she met her natural mother.

My husband believed that the Cartlidges would be found in Staffordshire, and this is where I started my search. I discovered from the 1871 census that James Cartlidge, my husband's great-grandfather, was born in Astbury near Congleton in Cheshire and that he had married Margaret Pemberton at Christ Church, Pennington, Lancashire on 16 October 1859. Now I was getting somewhere. The 'mother' of whom Aunt Jean had spoken was in fact her father-in-law's mother, and not her husband's as I had assumed.

In the very early stages I visited the Stafford Register Office and was encouraged by the very helpful Registrar. That worthy's opinion was that on the face of it, the connection between the Cartlidges and the Empress seemed so highly unlikely that I should take it seriously.

I also investigated the possibility that the descent of the Cartlidges was not through the Empress but through her husband the Emperor. The future Napoleon III was a promiscuous man who had visited Birmingham and Lancashire in 1839. I found nothing at all to substantiate this theory.

Through the Family History Society I had the good fortune to make contact with family historian and Astbury resident Frank Cartlidge, who was most interested in my

research and helped in any way he could. He told me that the family had lived in the village for at least four hundred years. Frank's great-grandfather and Derek's great-great-grandfather were brothers, sons of John Cartlidge (1782-1850) and his wife Mary (*née* Henshall).

At this stage came an interesting corroboration of the Cartlidge-Empress connection. My son, who was working in Staffordshire, met Barbara Perry *née* Cartlidge.

Mrs Perry told him that 'the Cartlidges were descended from the French "royal" family'. I had a telephone conversation with Mrs Perry, who told me that she had heard this through her father's uncle. Mrs Perry's Cartlidges are descended from William Cartlidge, son of John Cartlidge (born 1809), a farmer of Baddeley Green, Staffordshire. The two families may well have been distantly related since James's father Samuel was one of around twelve children born to John Cartlidge of Astbury, only 13 miles away from Baddeley Green.

* * *

The main part of my story examines the life of the Empress Eugénie, who was born exactly a century before me, almost to the very hour. The second part is based upon the life history of Margaret Pemberton.

Many biographies have been written about Eugénie, but other authors have not had my own advantage of family information. The validity of the connection between Eugénie and Margaret relies upon the very large number of coincidences involved, coincidences which go well beyond the bounds of probability.

The family information, personal names, occupations, places of residence, and significant dates of the Pembertons and the Cartlidges are the result of careful research. To make Margaret's story comprehensible and interesting

I have needed to make some assumptions about the day-to-day lives of the Pembertons and of Margaret's meetings with Eugénie. Unfortunately there are no letters or biographies of Margaret to study as there are for students interested in the Empress and her mother the Comtesse de Montijo. Of course, as with the journals and letters of Queen Victoria, Eugénie's letters were all carefully and systematically edited before historians ever saw them.

My research has been done purely out of curiosity. Family historians are often under suspicion of seeking out grandiose ancestors. We are, or should be, realists, prepared to accept the truths of history whatever they turn out to be. The past is already written and what has already taken place is unalterable.

I leave my readers to make their own judgement on the validity of my discoveries.

CHAPTER ONE

Eugénie: The Beginning

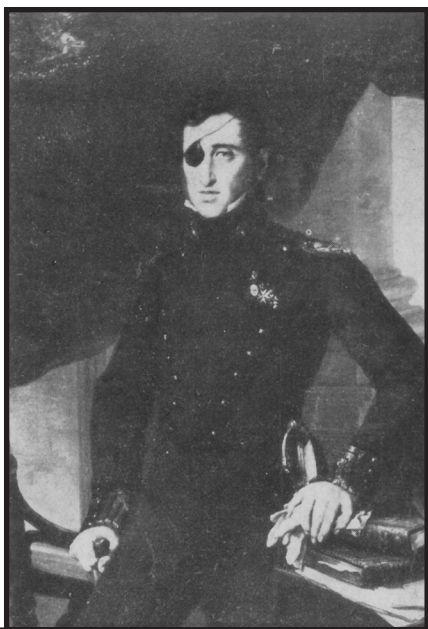
‘The history of domestic relations cannot be written in the same way as the history of international relations, and any description of them must be tentative and incomplete.’

– Theodore Zeldin¹²

In the lovely Spanish city of Granada, the inhabitants were on edge. The air was heavy and still with an eerie silence. Experience told them that an earthquake was on its way. It was 5th May 1826, the fifth anniversary of the death of Napoleon Bonaparte. At No. 12 Calle de Gracia an aristocratic couple, Cypriano, Conde de Teba, the younger brother of the Conde de Montijo, and his wife Maria Manuela, prepared for the birth of their second child. Servants swiftly erected a makeshift tent in the garden to avoid any danger from falling masonry. In this romantic setting amongst the roses and cypress trees, the red-haired baby who would be named Maria Eugenia Ignatia Augustina arrived.

Cypriano, ten years older than his wife, had served in Napoleon’s army as Colonel Portocarrero. After Napoleon’s defeat in Spain, because of his French sympathies

*Eugénie's parents
Cypriano, Conde de
Teba, and his wife
Maria Manuela,
Comtesse de Montijo*



Cypriano spent several periods in prison. A striking looking redhead, he wore a black patch over a missing eye, the result of an accident whilst proving a gun. In December 1817, in his thirties, Cypriano married Maria in the southern Spanish city of Malaga, although as a nobleman he had first to obtain the consent of the King. His bride was the daughter of a Scotsman, William Kirkpatrick, son of another William, himself the seventh child of a family of nineteen children from the tiny village of Conheath in Dumfries, Scotland. At the time of his daughter Maria's marriage Kirkpatrick was a fruit and wine merchant in Malaga, where he had been the American Consul, a position gained because of his French and American sympathies. Maria's mother was socially superior to her husband, as her father was a Belgian baron, Françoise de Grivénée, another Malaga wine merchant.

Maria and Cypriano had met in Malaga, where Maria had acted as hostess for her father, and got to know each other in Paris. Maria, dark-haired and attractive, was typically Spanish in appearance. A linguist and musician, she had been educated in Paris, a cultured woman by the standards of her day. Cypriano was very careful with money, but Maria loved the good things of life – perhaps not a good combination.

The couple's elder daughter Maria Francisca de Sales, known as Paca, was born in Santiago de Compostela on 29th January 1825, where her father was being held under house arrest.¹³ Gossip suggested that she was conceived during the time Cypriano was held in the grim prison of Santiago, the implication being that he was not her natural father.¹⁴ Maria loved travelling, but had to go abroad without her husband since Cypriano's freedom was restricted, presumably for political reasons. It was acceptable and not unusual for aristocratic married women to have lovers, and in Paris Maria had an affair with a

good-looking young Englishman, George Villiers, who is recorded variously as having sandy-coloured or very fair hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion.¹⁵ Later to be Earl of Clarendon and British Foreign Secretary, Villiers was regarded as being Eugénie's possible father. He was living in Paris in the summer of 1825, the time of her conception, and admitted in a letter to Teresa, his sister, that he was 'being very wicked'.¹⁶

A letter dated 1st February 1852 to a 'Mrs G.' states, 'Regarding Charles's letters to George [Villiers refers to himself in the third person] strongly advise unless good reason to contrary destroy all during your lifetime – might not mind Teresa having them – not like them to fall in other hands advise after Teresa's death be burnt. George's letters at Teresa's death to be returned to us'.¹⁷ This leaves no doubt that he was anxious about his earlier correspondence falling into the wrong hands. Portraits of the aquiline-featured Conde de Montijo, when compared with the rotund-featured Earl of Clarendon, favour Montijo as Eugénie's father. Eugénie made her appearance in French Imperial circles in 1852. In a letter sent to Teresa dated 9th September 1853, eight months after the Imperial marriage, Clarendon states 'I think that the anecdote that amused me most this evening was Madame Montijo telling [blotted] that after the Emperor's marriage was declared the Emperor shewed her a letter which had been written to him saying that his wife was George's daughter. The dame Montijo's answer was "*Sire, les dates ne correspondent pas.*"' He comments cryptically, 'Is that not that such?'¹⁸

Cypriano and his family lived in Granada until 1830, and during this period the couple had a third child, a son Paco, who lived only a few years. The children enjoyed the beautiful Palace of the Alhambra, which was close to their home. Here they listened with wonder to the tales

told to them by their parents' friend Washington Irving, the American author of 'Rip Van Winkle' and other charming stories.

They also came to know Prosper Mérimée, a personable young Frenchman whose mother lived in Paris. He was a frequent guest of their parents. A Protestant, reputed to be an atheist, he was a man of varied talents. A student of law, he spoke fluent English and had many English friends. A respected archaeologist he became Director of Ancient Monuments for France. The story of *Carmen* based on a tale told to him by Maria Manuela was his work. He regarded Maria as his 'best loved friend in the world'¹⁹ but his friends believed that 'he was not in love with her'.²⁰

Mérimée took a great interest in Paca and Eugénie, as she was already known by then. (When very young she had adopted the French spelling of her name.) After the death of her husband, Maria took her troubles to him and he became the family's mentor. When Eugénie became Empress of the French she also turned frequently to him. At her urgent request, he edited her papers — as an old family friend, he was *au fait* with the family affairs and could be relied upon to remain discreet. His English was fluent and he had many English friends, one of whom was a lawyer, Sutton Sharpe. Sharpe, the son of a wealthy brewer, practised at Lincoln's Inn, London. He regularly received personal letters from Mérimée and would forward others to addresses elsewhere in England on his friend's behalf.²¹

The two men met regularly in Paris to enjoy the nightlife. Sharpe's fiancée Sophie Duvaucel was not included in their jaunts, unlike Mérimée's mistress Valentine Delessert, who often went along with them. Mme. Delessert had been married to Gabriel Delessert, Paris Prefect of Police, for five years when her relationship with

Mérimée began. Their two children Cecil, born in 1825, and Edouard, born in 1828, were playmates of Paca and Eugénie. Mérimée was 'uncle' to all four.

Cypriano's elder brother Don Eugenio held the titles Conde de Montijo and Miranda and Duque de Peneranda. He had been paralysed by a stroke and confined to a wheelchair. In this state, he was married in 1825 shortly before Maria, his sister-in-law, became pregnant for the second time. Eugenio's bride was a former prostitute who schemed to inherit the family fortune. She smuggled an infant boy from the local orphanage into her home, intending to pass him off as her own child and her husband's heir.

Maria, hearing of the 'pregnancy', became suspicious. Her family's prospects were in jeopardy, but at this time she and her husband were forbidden to travel for political reasons. A resourceful and intelligent woman, she arranged to be invited to a ball where the King of Spain was to be present and succeeded in charming him into giving her permission to leave home. Her unexpected arrival at her brother-in-law's house foiled the plot. She took the baby to her own home where he was cared for until he was grown up. Eventually he joined the army where his career was described as 'unremarkable'.

The invalid Conde de Montijo died in 1834. That same year a cholera epidemic took hold in Spain. Maria, the new Condesa, and her children hurriedly left for France but quarantine regulations stopped them at Barcelona. On the journey from Madrid Maria had befriended a famous young bullfighter, Francisco Sevilla, whom the authorities allowed into the city. Sevilla used his influence and enabled Maria, his new-found friend, and her three children to complete their journey, via Perpignan, to Paris.

Around this time the little boy Paco died, and Mar-

ia sent his sisters to school at the Convent of the Sacré Coeur in the Rue de Varrennes, the fashionable part of Paris. With the girls settled, Maria Manuela went back to Madrid, returning to Paris once again in July 1835, this time with her husband. Eugénie was particularly thrilled to be with her father again, as she was his favourite where her mother always preferred the calm and serious Paca. Eugénie's letters show that she had a great affection for Cypriano and when separated missed him very much. A lively child, her temperament matched her titian hair, always an embarrassment to her as the other children teased her. Her father understood, as he had suffered the same way himself. In order that she should not feel too much of an oddity, he employed a young gardener with hair of a stronger shade of red than her own. Whilst at their summer home Quinta de Miranda, in upper Carabanchel near Madrid, Cypriano regularly took his younger daughter out riding, presumably astride rather than sidesaddle. She became a fearless horsewoman with a passion for the outdoor life.

During their time in Paris the de Montijos lived as a family. Although by this time rich and elevated socially, the Conde did not indulge his daughters. Their spartan regime involved walking everywhere even though there were carriages available. When it was raining there were no umbrellas. The girls' simple dresses in winter and summer alike were of plain linen.

It was in Paris on 12th November 1836 that the future Empress was to have her first sight of the man she was to marry. In the company of her cousins the de Lesseps children, she was taken to see the young Prince Louis Napoleon as he was being transported for political interrogation following the Bonapartist putsch attempt known as the 'Strasbourg affair'.²² This was an exciting event for Paca and Eugénie. Both their father and

Prosper Mérimée had told them tales of the great Emperor Napoleon, who had become their hero. This young Prince was his nephew.

After a short period at the Convent, Cypriano moved the sisters to a progressive school where physical training played an active part. The athletic and energetic Eugénie revelled in it. At home, the girls improved their English in conversation with an English governess, Miss Cole. On 25th March 1837 Eugénie took her first communion and on 5th May she celebrated her eleventh birthday. The 21st of the month was another landmark; Maria and her daughters left Paris for England where she enrolled the girls at a school for young ladies situated on the Royal York Crescent in Clifton, Bristol.²³ It was run by four sisters, the Misses Rogers, who arranged for the girls to attend the Trenchard Street Roman Catholic Chapel, the only Catholic church in Bristol.²⁴

We have the reminiscences of Emily, Lady Clive Bayley, daughter of Sir Thomas Metcalf, who was sent along with her cousin, another Emily, to the Misses Rogers School in the spring of 1837.²⁵ She writes of a formal schoolroom, stiff schoolmistresses and, astonishingly, dry bread for lunch. Amongst her fellow pupils were her own Aunt Mary, Catherine (later Mrs Hamilton and mother of Lady Dufferin) and Ellen Caldwell, and also the two daughters of the Conde and Condesa de Montijo, who were staying nearby in a house in the 'Paragon'. 'Pakita' was, Emily says, very dark and handsome – typically Spanish. Eugénie she describes as a Scottish type with bright red hair and freckles. The two Emilys spent a lot of time with the Spanish girls who spent their afternoons at their home, and occasionally stayed for dinner – presumably served in the nursery, since they ate from a toy dinner service. The Spaniard's mother, the Condesa, whom she describes as jolly and good-natured, was an old friend

of their aunt, who had recommended the school. Their father she described as evil-looking, because of the black patch he wore on his eye. Emily recalls that she was in school talking to Eugénie when she heard of the death of William IV on 20th June 1837.

The sisters did not enjoy England. Paca wrote home on 11th July 1837,²⁶ desperate for a visit from her parents. She told them that she found Clifton boring.²⁷ Eugénie was very unhappy because the other girls teased her calling her 'Carrots'. Two Indian princesses were equally miserable there; all three girls stowed away in a ship bound for India. Paca told her teacher, and the children were found before the ship sailed.

Maria rushed to Bristol when she heard what had happened, and in August removed her daughters. Fluency in English had been one reason for the choice of school; the alternative was a new English governess. Maria engaged Maria Juana Flower²⁸ probably from Pensford near Bristol and took her with her daughters to Paris. This time it was the usually placid Paca who became rebellious and gave Miss Flower a rough time. Presumably the Conde and Condesa were not at home since Prosper Mérimée went to sort things out.

At this time Cypriano was back in Spain and was obliged to obtain permission from the Queen Regent to return to Paris, where they had two houses, 24 Rue d'Angoulême and 12 Place Vendôme. After only four months he was recalled, saying goodbye to Paca and Eugénie for what was to be the last time in January of 1838.²⁹ Maria left Paris shortly thereafter, although she could not have been lonely in Paris since her sister and her brother-in-law Matthieu de Lesseps lived there, as did her old friend Prosper Mérimée, who enlarged her circle with his own friends. Amongst them was Henri Beyle, the author better known as 'Stendhal' (1783-1842), who was

a weekly visitor to her home. Maria's first port of call was London, moving on to the various fashionable watering places.

In February 1839 Maria was back in Paris, where she received news of Cypriano's illness. She immediately rushed off to Madrid. Three weeks later on 17th March, Miss Flower received an urgent message from her employer instructing her to return the girls to Madrid as their father was deteriorating. They were too late. He died on the 19th, the sad news reaching them at an overnight stop at Oloron.

Stendhal, who was smitten with Paca and Eugénie, made a coded reference to their leaving Paris in a footnote to Chapter 3 of his novel *La Chartreuse de Parme*, which he was writing at the time: 'Para V P. y E. 15 X 38'. ('For you Paca and Eugénie 15 December 1838', 'X' apparently referring not to October but the Latin December.) A few days later in Chapter 26, another footnote read 'P y E in Olo' ('Paca and Eugénie in Oloron').³⁰

Mérimée recorded that Eugénie was becoming a woman at the time she left Paris in 1839.

Paca and Eugénie would not return to Paris until they were grown.