

THE FLIGHT OF AN EMPRESS.

The flight of the Empress Eugenie from Paris, and her subsequent escape to England, is probably the most romantic episode of the Franco-Prussian War. It will be remembered that when her husband, Napoleon III., departed for the seat of war, the Empress assumed the regency of France. For several weeks she ruled quietly, but then came the dreadful news of the defeat of the French Army at Sedan and the surrender of Napoleon. It is said that the Empress received the first information from Prince Metternich, the Austrian Ambassador, who warned her that she was personally in great danger. The city of Paris became excited, and a mob gathered around the Tuileries. In the palace everything was in confusion, and the howling multitude was not to be restrained. The crowd burst into the apartments of the Empress, and there can be no doubt that if they had found her there she would have been murdered. It was, however, found that she had disappeared, and for once the blood-thirsty proletariat was disappointed.

For some years the manner of the escape of the Empress remained a well-kept secret. It was popularly regarded as a mystery and curious legends began to gather around it. As a natural consequence the earliest published accounts of this event were full of confusion. The "American Cyclopaedia" (1879) says, for instance, that "the Empress fled at midnight accompanied by Metternich, the Italian Minister Nigra, the Countess Walewska, M. de Lesseps and her aged

secretary, Mme. Lebreton." All this now appears absurd. It is certain that the Empress would not have got very far if she had left the Tuileries accompanied by such a high and mighty company.

It was only by degrees that the true facts of the case came to be known. No doubt the persons who were immediately interested for personal reasons hesitated to publish all the particulars. Appleton's "Cyclopaedia of American Biography" (1887) briefly says that "the story is told in several ways," but that "it is generally accepted that the Empress was taken to the residence of Dr. Thomas W. Evans for refuge." "She was hurried into his carriage," it is said, "and driven beyond the walls of the city, while he held in front of her face an open newspaper which he was apparently reading." The "Cyclopaedia Americana" says, in the same connection, that "she was recognized only by a boy whose exclamation passed unnoticed." The latter statement may be founded on a doubtful story which we heard many years ago. It was said that when the Empress entered Dr. Evans' carriage a man recognized her and said, "That's the Empress!" Immediately the Doctor caught him by the throat and prevented him from saying more. The bystanders inquired "What did he say?" and the Doctor replied, "He said, Hurrah for the Prussians!" Then he whispered into the man's ear, "Run as fast as you can or they will tear you to pieces!" The fellow took his advice, and it was in this way that his exclamation remained unnoticed. We may add that this story is entirely without confirmation, and that it is probably one of the legends to which we have already referred.

It is only since the death of Dr. Evans that the particulars of this

marvellous episode have become generally known. In later life the Doctor wisely prepared a full account, which has recently appeared in a prominent magazine and is also preserved in a permanent volume. There is, however, an earlier account, written by his wife in the form of letters to an intimate friend in Lancaster, and it is this which I take pleasure in presenting on the present occasion. Though these letters contain many local allusions, they will for this reason be especially interesting; and for comparison with the Doctor's published account they will be found to be of permanent historical interest.

It is, we suppose, generally known that before Dr. Thomas W. Evans, the



Dr. Thomas W. Evans.

famous American dentist, removed to Paris, he resided for several years in Lancaster. It was here that he began to acquire the eminence which naturally led to his brilliant subsequent

career. In Lancaster he and his wife made many friends, to whom they remained closely attached during all the subsequent years; but among them all they were probably most intimate with Dr. and Mrs. Charles A. Heinitsh. Dr. Heinitsh, as we all remember, was a man of talent, who enjoyed more than a local reputation in pharmacy and general science, and his wife was a woman of high culture. For many years Mrs. Evans maintained an intimate correspondence with Mrs. Heinitsh, who had been bridesmaid at her wedding, and whom she loved as a sister.

Mrs. Heinitsh died July 5, 1903, leaving no descendants. A few years before her death she suffered the present writer to take copies of the following letters, at the same time granting special permission for their publication after her decease. The writer has other letters, addressed by Mrs. Evans to Mrs. Heinitsh, but as containing an account of the flight from Paris of the Empress Eugenie, and of other events with which the name of Dr. Evans is most generally associated, it is believed that the following are possessed of unusual interest:

“Hastings, Sept. 21st, 1870.

“My Darling Friend: Here we are in England—fugitives from this fearful war. Our home desolated by this time, perhaps—we dare not think of it. We are safe for the time, leaving nearly everything of value in our house, as we could bring but few things, such as everyday clothing, a portion of our jewels and some silver, but paintings, statuary and all very valuable large articles are at the mercy of the mob or Prussians. Our horses are left—the coachman, man servant and cook are in the house, and protect it as much as they can.

The maid servant came with us—she is a Swiss, fortunately, and has not her home in France.

“We know not, and can not know, what Paris is doing—all communication being cut off for the present. I left Paris a month since for Deauville, a quiet bathing place in Normandy, about five hours from Paris. We heard such discouraging accounts of the French defeats and Prussians moving on Paris that ‘most of us deemed it imprudent to remain in France. When news reached us of the downfall of the Empire and flight of the Empress there was a complete exodus of the French from Paris and her environs. As we were not far from Havre or Dieppe we choose the latter, as hundreds were rushing for Havre, the boats being unable to accommodate all. We have with us Dr. and Lydia Sharpless, who accompanied us to Deauville, remaining there until we all came here. On crossing from Dieppe to Newhaven—the distance of seven hours at sea—we were overtaken by a gale and had a fearful passage—our boat being tossed about unmercifully. The cabin was overcrowded by French refugees—I never pitied people so much in my life—families rushing away from their comfortable and luxurious homes with young children—abandoning nearly everything to save themselves from the dreaded Germans who are overrunning France in hordes. Normandy is the most prosperous and lovely part of France—one vast orchard of fruit when we crossed from Deauville to Dieppe. Alas! what will it be when this hateful war is ended. France is certainly paying dearly for her impolitic war—but was she to blame? I am sufficiently French to feel indignant at Prussia for marching on Paris. Justice called for a cessation of hostil-

ities the moment the Emperor was taken—he and the King were the two duellists, and between them the fate of the two nations rested. God could never look upon so unjust a war and permit any one country to overcome so completely the other—there may be a heathen god of war, but not a Christian one. He looks upon and permits men to be thus punished, but he assists not in such destruction—however Prussia may think she is protected by heaven.

I never witnessed as now the frightful consequences of war—being too far removed from the field—now we are in the midst, seeing and hearing from the immediate sufferers. All the American families who could leave Paris have done so. Many residents have been compelled to leave their all, save a few articles of clothing. We shall most of us remain in England until we can return to France.

“I wish all letters for the present addressed to Langham Hotel, London. We shall make that our headquarters. I am now with dear Tom on a visit to Hastings, a lovely bathing place on the sea—only two hours by rail from London. The Empress is also at this place with the young prince. I have seen her several times, and, oh! how differently from our former meetings—she has wept upon my neck and kissed me as a sister. I can scarcely believe I am not dreaming—but adversity makes us all equals.

“My dear husband’s great attachment to the Imperial family has made it almost dangerous for him at present in Paris, where they are so reviled—and no one has been so faithful a friend as he in their downfall. How much it recalls to my mind the poor Duchess of Orleans’ flight during the 1848 revolution. How implacable is the French republic! al-

ways so full of hatred and cruelty. While men live to make a republic of such material it can never be permanent—there must be order and moderation. The poor Empress would have been torn in pieces by the enraged mob had she not been rescued.



Mrs. Thomas W. Evans.

Of this most romantic flight I shall tell you at length some day. At present my husband thinks it prudent to say but little. When events are more quiet I will write you a full account if you do not learn it from our friends, the Sharplesses, for the return to America per Scotia, October 22, and will no doubt see Mrs. Ellmaker during the autumn.

"I regretted exceedingly to learn of Mrs. Hager's sudden death. Miss Sharpless had a letter from Mrs. Ellmaker some weeks ago, which informed her of this bereavement. Please give my deep sympathy to the family. How much she must be missed—she was such a lovely woman.

“Write to me, dearest Mollie, in my exile. I shall miss all letters sent to me during August, I suppose, as there is no possibility of their reaching Paris by the late mails.

“I have heard from home but once since my niece left. She sailed August 13th, and her first letter was forwarded me. We do not get papers or anything. This seems a solemn moment for all—even for those who have no interests at stake.

“The weather is most lovely—the sea almost motionless. The place is very beautifully situated, and, although a large town, it is as quiet as some country place. There are ten churches, of different denominations. The people appear happy and prosperous—the various churches are well supported, and the place itself must be a pleasant winter residence, I should think. It is well sheltered from the north winds by high cliffs, which are on one side, and the sea, facing south, on the other. To-day I am seated at a bay window in our private sitting room—looking upon the sea, which is brilliantly flashing in the sunlight. Small boats, filled with parties of ladies and children, passing and re-passing, while myriads of fishing boats are visible in the distance. The drives are varied and most interesting—the Esplanade the finest I ever saw. You can drive for miles on the seaside—then turn into the country, where there are lovely, quiet cottages and churches, such as only England can afford. Such numbers of beautiful, rosy children I never saw at so small a place. Every step we come upon groups with their nurses—another product of England’s surpassing all other nations in this respect. It is not rare to see five or six little girls, all dressed alike and varying

from two to ten years old, and one or two baby boys, all belonging to the same family—all looking blooming and healthy. I could not think of any spot more enjoyable than this for a few months' residence, if not a fugitive from our own comfortable home, but under present circumstances I must say I regret my own dear home and all its surroundings. But I was always too happy in it, and must now be thankful that I have had so many blessings and still enjoy enough. I only pray God to stay this war, that all France may not be devastated—the poor peasant deprived of his all. As it will require years to repair all the dire destruction done in Paris alone—if it is ever repaired—the destruction of private property alone is irreparable.

“Please give our love to all inquiring friends. I wrote you the 23rd of July—have not heard from you since. Good-bye. I hope my next letter will be dated Paris, though I hardly dare utter such a hope.

“Your ever sincere

“AGNES.

“Theodore and Fannie are in Switzerland. Their house was thought to be condemned, being outside the fortifications and opposite the Bois de Boulogne. They have had all their furniture removed to a place of safety—that is, if Paris is not bombarded, in which case all must go.”

4 Clarges Street,
Piccadilly, Oct. 20, 1870.

“My very dear friend: I was most grateful to receive your sweet letter, darling Mollie—it quite revived me in our exile. I have read and re-read it, feeling in each word so much true and sincere friendship—for I regard you

and dear Charles as the dearest of our earthly friends. You have always been firm to believe us to be unchanged. I also received the papers sent by dear Charles.

"Since I wrote to you last we have passed through a trying ordeal. I will try to give you some details of my dear husband's adventures, which have been attended with danger on every side, and you can judge how hard it is to see and hear such untruthful and cruel reports about him when he has ever been so upright and just, self-sacrificing and devoted to his true principles of right.

"When you see my friend Miss Sharpless (as I hope you may) she can tell you more than I can write. I know she will visit Mrs. Ellmaker, but when I can not say. Dr. Sharpless and Miss S. sail on Saturday next per Scotia—October 22d—the same steamer by which I mail this.

"On the memorable September 4th, the day of the proclamation of the French Republic, I, being at Deauville on the coast of France, expected my dear husband to join me as soon as he could leave his duties in Paris, which he was making his preparations to do. On that Sunday morning (for it was on Sunday) the whole of Paris was in revolution. My husband drove in to his office to see if all was safe. He was there with several other gentlemen—he had invited some friends whose wives were absent to dine at our house quite sociably—among whom was our clergyman, Rev. Mr. Samson, and his son George—who are connected with Thomas' Sanitary Society. These were assembled about 5 p. m. in our house. When my husband and his friend, Dr. Edward Crane (a surgeon in our army during the war) returned, our man servant told Thomas two ladies were anxious to see him—they had been waiting

since half-past two o'clock. He, not guessing at all who his guests were, went into our library, where they awaited him, and there to his amazement he beheld the Empress Eugenie and a lady friend—the only one near her in her hour of peril. Thomas was greatly puzzled when Eugenie besought him to save her. She then related what had really occurred. On the entrance of the Paris mob into the Palace she was not prepared to leave, nor had she any idea of doing so, but the Prince of Metternich and Count de Nigra both insisted she should. She resisted, telling them that General Trochu had told her not to leave the palace until they had reached her over his dead body; but the above-named gentlemen pushed her out of a door after having thrown over her shoulders a waterproof cloak—on her head a bonnet and in her hand she carried a small satchel containing a prayer book and a few handkerchiefs—in this way she left the Palace, having the lady with her. They ran through the gallery leading on the court yard of the Louvre. There finding a hackney coach they drove to our house. It was then for Thomas to find means of getting her safely out of France. He at once consulted with his friend, Dr. C., who made all due apologies to the invited guests, as my husband could not explain to them the cause of his wishing to leave the city as soon as possible. They had to think and say what they chose. Thus it was a report became current that Thomas was in league with the Imperial family—had secreted plate and jewelry. How awful to say such fearful falsehoods against one who has always been loyal and honorable in all his actions! In those papers Charles sent I noticed a most false paragraph. Why will people invent to the detriment of

others' character? We did not even save our own silver, and certainly it never occurred to my husband to conceal, or aid in doing so, anything belonging to the Empress. She sought our house and his protection from an infuriated mob; we did not suppose she would be obliged to do anything of the kind, but at the moment of peril her friends at Court proved not to be her friends in need.

“Tuesday, Oct. 25th.

“It was for my husband to bear all that might be said evil—but what could he do—he has always been devoted to the Emperor because he has ever been treated kindly by him—but as to doing anything secret or dishonorable, never could Thomas be induced to such actions. He got the Empress out of Paris with our own horses and carriage as far as the former could go. When they left, which was at 4 in the morning of Monday, September 5th, they went safely to a country town outside St. Germain. There they assumed to be English people going to France—one of the ladies an invalid, who had to be carried from carriage to carriage. In this way the Empress was smuggled out of danger to where I was staying—Deauville, on the Norman coast. On reaching here, Tuesday, September 6, my husband came to my rooms. He looked pale and trembling—said he had the Empress in a carriage outside the Casino—a sort of garden attached to the hotel where I was. The carriage in which they then were was also a hackney coach. As all was very quiet in the hotel—for Deauville is a very quiet seaside place, only a few Americans and a very few Frenchmen in the hotel—my husband was able to conduct the Empress to my room without meeting any one. On reach-

ing this place of safety she thanked God and felt happy. I, of course, having only known her amidst court etiquette and luxury, could not at once think of her as anything but an Empress—but she appeared so humble and thankful I felt she was a woman like myself and threw aside all formality with her. She seemed full of heart and feeling, most interesting and lovely. She remained with me until Thomas went in pursuit of some method of getting to England. There was an English gentleman whose yacht lay at Deauville waiting fine weather to put to sea. To this gentleman Thomas applied, and, of course, it was accorded the illustrious fugitive to leave in the yacht at an early hour next morning. Until near midnight the Empress was in our rooms—no one in the hotel suspecting the fact—and next morning the yacht departed for England with my husband, Engenie and Mme. Le Breton, her lady companion. Our dear friend, Dr. Crane, returned to Paris to attend to my dear Thomas' sanitary business which this event forced [him] to abandon. Dr. C. is still in Paris—we receive [letters] occasionally from him by balloon or General Burnside. My husband encountered a heavy gale crossing over to England—they were 24 hours reaching Ryde. The Empress met her son at Hastings—from there I wrote you. I remained there two weeks, then came here. The Empress is near London in a quiet place and seems comparatively happy—she having her son with her—and hears frequently from her husband. Thomas has gone to visit the recent battlefields. He writes from Metz, which place is in a deplorable condition—illness and famine prevail. God grant Paris may be spared these! I expect him back in a few days—no doubt he will have much to recount to me.

“In our friend’s letter from Paris, dated the 15th of October, received yesterday, October 24th, he says our dear home remains safe so far—the man servant and the cook remain on guard. How long this will be we cannot say. If bombardment takes place our house is exposed to being in ruins soon, as it is near the Bois de Boulogne. There are over 200 Americans shut up in Paris. They may be able to get out with Mr. Washburne—in any case they will be obliged to come without baggage. Those of us who are safely out are not any too well supplied. Many left without warm clothing, not thinking of being unable to return in a few weeks. It was not realized that Europe would see Paris sacrificed—nor can we think so yet—but, alas! to what a state must the city be reduced before we can return. It must be awful to see the destruction around that once lovely place—St. Cloud almost destroyed—the palace burned—Versailles more or less damaged. It will beggar description to give any idea of the ruin and desolation caused by this dreadful war.

“Theodore and Fannie are at Geneva, where Fannie’s parents are—her father still a great sufferer. No doubt they will be obliged to go to Italy or some warm climate for him before next month. We may remain in London—I cannot say. I have a great many friends here, who, like ourselves, are fugitives, and we hope to return, but cannot say when, to our home in Paris. London climate is not agreeable, though so far it has not been very unpleasant. Like all European autumns, rain, sunshine and fog. My health so far has been very good here.

“I did not get this letter off by the

22nd. Our friends, the Sharplesses, sailed then. I was prevented by many interruptions to send you this before this week's mail. Please direct in future to the care of James W. Tacker, Banker, Bartholomew House, Bartholomew Lane, London—the letters will always reach us through Mr. Tacker's address. Though we have rooms pleasantly situated, near the Park, and very central, I do not know that we shall remain here all the time. There is nothing decided, for from day to day we always hope to be able to return to our dear Parisian home. Even if there were peace proclaimed, I fear Paris would scarcely be habitable for a long time—there must be great desolation everywhere around the poor city.

“Love to all our dear friends—let them know of our safety.

“I like your photograph very much, though you are not yourself without spectacles to me. Yet I thank you for the sweet likeness, if not quite as sweet as the original. Kiss little Charlie, and do not let him forget his auntie, who sent him for so many fans, little thinking they would ever come into possession of the Prussians with so many other valuable articles. A great deal of love for yourself and dear Charles, from

“Your ever attached,

“AGNES.”

Author: Dubbs, J. H. (Joseph Henry), 1838-1910.

Title: The flight of an Empress / by Joseph Henry Dubbs, D.D.
LL.D.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Evans, Thomas Wiltberger, 1823-1897.

Evans, Agnes.

Eugenie, 1826-1920.

Heinitish, Charles A.

Franco-Prussian War, 1870-1871.

Lancaster (Pa.)--Biography.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,
1905/1906

Description: [41]-55 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 10,
no. 2

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.10

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

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