

Chapter 22 : Princess Josephine of Leuchtenberg (I) (1807-1823) - "Napoleon's Goddaughter".

July 4, 1817, Oscar had obtained a five-year reprieve from Charles XIII in order to pursue his studies. Meanwhile, his father sounded out the situation of the European marriage market. I'll line up the known candidates.

- While 10-year-old Oscar was promised to his cousin Zenaïde Bonaparte (1801-1854; m. 1822) who through her father Joseph Bonaparte was Princess of Spain. The engagement was cancelled twice: 1810 by her Catholic religion and again in 1813 by her father's dethronement, because the order of succession was interpreted as meaning that the candidate must be Lutheran (not true) and from a ruling house (true).
- In 1810, even before Charles John was elected successor to the Swedish throne, the king of Prussia proposed marriage to his daughter Alexandrine (1803-1892; m. 1822). Charles John declined on the grounds that he could not make such a decision himself: Charles XIII, his wife and son must first agree. Charles XIII supported the proposal but he delayed his decision & in 1817 he promised Oscar a reprieve until 1823.
- 1821/22, there were discussions about suitable courts to visit. The Danish court was a given as there were two unmarried princesses: Vilhelmina (1808-1891; m. 1828) & Karoline (1793-1881; m. 1829). Additional princesses were suggested: Theresa von Thurn und Taxis (1800-1870; m. 1827), Augusta zu Solms-Braunfels (1804-1865; m. 1827), Elisa Radzivill (1803-1834; unmarried) & Marie von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach (1802-1877). Charles John also took advice from Baron Carl Axel Ludvig von Böhnen (1760-1829), employed at the Bavarian court but at the moment in Sweden to visit relatives.¹ His proposal was the King of Bavaria's granddaughter Josephine of Leuchtenberg (1807-1876), daughter of Charles John's old colleague General Eugène de Beauharnais. At the last moment a proposal was also made by Countess Aurora Wetterstedt (1779-1834; b. De Geer) of two princesses of Hesse-Kassel: Karoline (1799-1864; unmarried) and Marie (1804-1888; m.1825). During a visit, Oscar also took a liking to Princess Marianne of the Netherlands (1810-1883; m. 1830).
- On October 16, 1821, the French minister in Stockholm Count Hector d'Agoult reported on Oscar's prospects: "He lacks pronounced talent & domestic political support. His father only mentions his goodness and exalted character. It takes more than goodness for Sweden to assert itself. There is already talk of twenty failed marriage projects & that Eugène de Beauharnais daughter has refused."²

On May 9, 1822, Oscar started on a combined tour of marriage, education and presentation. There are too many complications to be accounted for here. Everyone spoke for their favourite candidates & Oscar had difficulty reaching a decision. The Danish kingdoms were the most politically suited - a Danish marriage would have made Oscar Danish heir - but after the loss of Norway and the Swedish throne election, Frederick VI found it hard to stomach.

You have your free choice, but I beg you not to insult anyone. The whole world knows you're looking for a princess; If you postpone it, your intentions are distrusted.

¹ Anrep 1858: del 1, s. 380.

² Girod de l'Ain 1975: s. 8.

It will be believed that you have preconceived notions, and that this or weakness is the reason why you delay. You know I would prefer the young princess of Leuchtenberg if she appeals to you and you please her. All external circumstances speak for this alliance.³

Desirée thought that the son deserved someone from the Almanach de Gotha, but for Charles John it had entered prestige into the choice of the daughter of someone with the same background as himself:

I repeat: Glory is the supreme award. As long as it lasts, it forms the basis of all nobility in this world, and in that sense I am one of the greatest nobles in Europe. The Duke of Leuchtenberg is morally a royal relative. Although he is not included among those that our order of succession accepts, it is the relationship with him that I prefer.⁴

In addition, Josephine would legitimize the Bernadotte lineage in the eyes of the Vienna Congress.

... What benefits are not attached to the princess of Leuchtenberg? She is the granddaughter of a king, niece to the Emperor of Austria and to the King of Saxony, and so belongs one of the oldest ruling dynasties in Europe. Her father has been recognized by all the rulers of Europe as king of Italy after the death of Napoleon. And through the family pact, he has a claim to the throne of Bavaria. ... Indeed, it is a party, that should satisfy the highest demands.⁵

[As can be seen below, this was something of an embellishment. Eugène's claim to the Italian and Bavarian throne has not been verifiable. The Emperor of Austria's son was married to Sophia, daughter of the King of Bavaria in his 2nd marriage. Eugène was married to Augusta, daughter of the king in his 1st marriage. Jean mentions that negotiations were under way, but Eugène appears to have died before they were completed. He may have been raised posthumously.]

On August 23 Oscar arrived at Eichstädt to at least meet the princess before proceeding to the next candidate. There were newspaper reports that the engagement was already decided on. If he did not visit, it would create rumours of a conflict. Now everything worked out in the best way...

The sources of the marriage candidates (above) and of Josephine's upbringing (below) coincide (Mellin 1844: ss. 69-96; Hellstenius 1868: ss. 235-255 & 1872: ss. 98-111; Müller 1873: ss. 57-81; Löwenhielm 1927: ss. 164-202; Knagg 1932: ss. 39-63; Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 89-129; Ulvros 2007: ss. 83-104; Rangström 2010: ss. 298-315; Rotbain 2015).

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Josephine Maximiliana Eugenia Napoleona of Leuchtenberg (1807-1876; b. de Beauharnais) was the daughter of Charles John's old colleague General Eugène de Beauharnais (1788-

³ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 105-106; Ulvros 2007: s. 86. [Brev från Karl Johan till Oscar, 1822-07-09.]

⁴ Girod de l'Ain 1960: ss. 206-207. [Brev från Karl Johan till Desirée. Okänt datum.]

⁵ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 107-108. [Brev från Karl Johan till Desirée. Okänt datum.]

1824), who through his marriage to Princess Augusta of Bavaria (1788-1851) managed to survive the post-war period. She was born on March 14, 1807, in Milan. Napoleon was her godfather. From birth she was Princess of France, but on December 20, 1807, Napoleon also awarded her the title Princess of Bologna and May 28, 1813, the Duchy of Galliera, located in the province of Bologna, 30 km north west of the city of Bologna. The fief included a palace located in the town of Bologna.

Eugène's father, Vicomte Alexandre de Beauharnais, was executed in 1794 during the terror. (Vicomte="half-Count" was a title in rank between Count & Baron.) His mother Joséphine de Beauharnais married Napoleon in 1796. Eugène was appointed Prince of France in 1804, in 1806 adopted by Napoleon & the same year granted the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza. 1806-1814 he was viceroy of Italy. At the Vienna Congress 1815, Eugène retained his fortune and in 1817 (through his wife's parents) was able to buy himself a small fifty thousand-strong fiefdom located in the state of Bavaria. At the time of Oscar's proposal, he was Duke of Leuchtenberg, Prince of Eichstädt and member of the Bavarian Privy Council. 1810 Napoleon had in fact offered him the Swedish crown in place of Jean Bernadotte, but Eugène had refused, citing that his wife was very religious, and would take offence if he converted.

After the French defeat, the family lived in Munich during the winter, in the summers at the estate Ismaning & in the autumn in Eichstädt. Josephine had nostalgic memories of a quiet life with evenings in front of the hearth, sledge outings & skating. On May 22, 1820, she received her first communion.⁶ On March 24, 1820, she was confirmed.⁷ In Munich, she home studied with her siblings, under the leadership of the governess Miss von Mieg. Her teachers included Le Sage (history, geography and living languages: French, German, Italian & English), Martius (Botany & Natural History), Siebers (Mathematics, Physics & Astronomy), member of consistory von Urban (Religion) and special teachers in Latin, piano, dance, singing, drawing, painting & handicraft.⁸ Later she also learned Swedish, Norwegian & Russian. Her teacher in Swedish was Axel Samuel Stål (1787-1875). The Swedish studies started in 1822/23.

We never read novels, no one talked to us about them or about anything else that could distort the heads of children with vivid imagination. Journey reports, history, the abbreviated Plutarch for girls, fairy tales such as Bluebeard, little Red Riding Hood and Cat in boots etc. etc. Buffon's natural history, botany, that's what we read.⁹

In mid-October 1821, the aforementioned visit of baron von Böhnen took place, who wanted the parents' approval for him proposing their daughter as a marriage candidate to the Swedish crown prince, which was granted. It seems to have been a private initiative. All accounts of von Böhnen describe him as a "scheming jerk" and find it hard to understand why Charles John listened to him. However, Charles John throughout his career had two faces: On the one hand, he tried to appear as serious and middle of the road conventional as possible. On the other, he hired fixers "outside the system" who, with his good memory, ignored all such niceties. Only the results counted.

⁶ Müller 1873: s. 56.

⁷ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: s. 112,

⁸ Müller 1873: ss. 55-56. [Uppgifterna om vem som undervisade i vad varierar mellan källorna.]

⁹ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: s. 111. [Ur Josefinas dagbok, ca. 1824.]

On October 26, 1821, the de Beauharnais family and their court moved into the newly built Leuchtenberg Palace in Munich. They lived court life which for Josephine & the siblings implied switching between morning- & evening attire and meet relatives. On February 1, 1822, von Böhnen returned with the Swedish Order of the Seraphim as a gift to Eugène and with a letter in which Charles John wondered if he and his wife were still in favour of marriage. In the letter, he put forward the arguments. Like Desirée, Josephine was to retain her Catholic religion. The answer to Charles John was that Oscar was welcome to try his luck. von Böhnen had a portrait of Oscar with him and got one of Josephine back. He returned in early June to tell them how their case developed.

Meanwhile, Josephine began to sense what was going on but tried to pretend ignorance. She was seriously worried. After von Böhnen's visit, her father took her for a walk and told her: The Prince had to choose between eight princesses who were as beautiful and wise as she herself. "And if he chooses you, you must decide which religion you want because he is a Protestant." Josephine started crying. Sweden was far from home.

In early August, Eugène's new secretary, Colonel Planat de la Faye, arrived to help him edit his memoirs, etc. In his letters to his sister, de la Faye wrote at large about an isolated exile court where everyone was waiting for death or a miracle. The girls had, under the leadership of their mother & chief maid Friederike von Wurmb (1767-1834) received a typical princess training, only intended for show.¹⁰ He would have liked to see them practice in the kitchen as well. Oscar's visit was delayed but on August 23 he arrived and the company, two dozen people, and were received with all the honours available. Josephine introduced herself with a gracious curtsy but then made herself invisible. There were no attempts at persuasion. After two days Oscar had made his choice:

[Löwenhielm:] He has studied her character and realized that in this he has the most certain guarantee of his future happiness. Soft, loving and down-to-earth, she has a good education but does not make a big affaire of it, unless she has to. She joins a delightful outward purity and sincerity with a beautiful soul. She will be a great mother. The crown prince is as impressed as the rest of us. His choice is wise, guided by both heart and head.¹¹

[Mother Augusta:] Prince Oscar has spoken to Eugène with touching openness. Oscar was previously opposed to this marriage, believing it better politics to marry a princess closer to the throne. His father, however, was in favour, because he was convinced that Prince Eugène's daughter was the best party available, that a spotless reputation was more worth than a crown ... The king wanted Oscar to meet the daughter and judge for himself. Despite this, he almost did not come, according to the newspapers because one wanted to force him. But when he saw us act with so much tact and restraint, he abandoned such thoughts. Now he let nothing intervene. ... [He] is completely enamoured of the shy and beautiful Josephine, who has instantly fallen in love with the prince and the marriage is decided.¹²

[Josephine: The 23rd, 7:00 in the evening. The cannons fired a welcome salute.] The door opened but only my father entered. But then the door was opened a second time and he came in. He talked for a long time with my mother about the trip, and then he

¹⁰ Oman 1966: ss. 458-459.

¹¹ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 108-109. [Löwenhielms rapport till Karl Johan.]

¹² Adalbert av Bayern 1940: s. 447-448; Nohrenius 2006: ss. 228-229. [Ur mor Augustas dagbok, 1822-08-25.]

presented his suite and mother introduced her ladies, and then my parents along with the prince and we children entered the salon. We all stood in a row, all six of us, straight as organ pipes (so also named by my father). That over and done with, the prince left for his room, and the evening passed like any other.

The 24th. The next day, when we went down into the garden, the prince came there with one of his gentlemen companions, and I had to talk to him, but did not say many words. In the evening there was a theatre performance, I had to sit next to the prince but I didn't say much then either. But the next day was an Italian opera and then things were much worse, because everyone was staring at our box - I then spoke with one of his gentlemen and took the opportunity to sit down in the back of it so as not to be seen from the stalls.

The 25th. No entries in the diary. [Oscar & the Duke paid a courtesy visit to the king of Saxony's sister not far away.¹³ The reason for the visit was that her brother had fought on the French side during the Napoleonic wars.]

The 26th. The next day while Mom and I were singing with our Italian singing teacher, Dad entered with the prince and one of the gentlemen... I had to sing, and the prince sang too. We were extremely surprised at the soft tone of his voice. He whispered for a while with my father in a window niche, and right as it was he approached mom, and my father introduced him as her beloved (i.e. he would play the first lover role in the play they were going to give in the evening). Then we left and I to dress for dinner with my parents. I had barely started undressing, when my father entered, kissed me and said: "The Prince has decided on you and requested my consent, which I also gave. But on condition of your own consent." I couldn't answer except to embrace and kiss him. And still crying I visited my governess and my sister in their rooms.

In the salon before dinner I for the first time had the courage to look at him, our eyes met, but I immediately lowered mine. Afterwards we talked calmly, mother, the prince and I, but only about everyday things of no concern. Suddenly, my mother got up and walked away from us, not with the intention of leaving, but with the intention of letting us speak one on one, and the prince asked if my father had spoken to me and if I had given my yes. God knows what I answered. I was afraid and I did not know whether I was too friendly or too stiff. Then we went to the Italian opera. On his return the prince handed me a ring with one large solitary [an opal stone surrounded by small diamonds and enamelled flowers], which his father the king had decided on, and also a small ring with three stones, representing faith, hope and love. I also supped with my parents, which which hadn't happened until then, and all morning I was with them.¹⁴

[Mother Augusta:] On August 27, a soiree is given at the castle; Josephine sits at the piano and sings with Oscar. When the piece is finished, Oscar goes up to the Duke and says he would like to hear the young girl's opinion. Asked by her father, she responds with an enthusiastic consent. "I have always obeyed my parents," she says facing the prince, "and this time I do so with great joy." - "Their mutual happiness was evident", Joséphine's mother noted in her intimate diary.¹⁵

¹³ Mellin 1844: s. 84.

¹⁴ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 114-115. [Ur Josefinas dagbok, ca. 1824. Sista stycket något redigerat.]

¹⁵ Adalbert av Bayern 1940: s. 448; Girod de l'Aine 1960: ss. 207-208; Ulvros 2007: s. 94. [Ur Augustas dagbok, 1822-08-27.]

[Löwenhielm:] The Duke told me that he had rarely wept as much as when he first announced his royal highness' the Crown Prince intentions to his daughter. Her response, he said, was to throw herself to my chest, to tell me between tears that she found the prince in her taste, but that she did not understand how she deserved the prince's high opinions of her. In the same moment she saw her mother open the door, and as she ran up to her to hide in her arms, she exclaimed: "Mom, I will always do as you have done!" "And then", the duke answered with tears in his eyes, "then the crown prince will experience what I have experienced the last 16 years, the most uninterrupted and complete family happiness, for my wife has the character and a disposition of an angel."¹⁶

[Oscar's letter to Charles John was about de Beauharnais as the perfect family. *He* respected for his political and martial arts. *She* admired for her virtue and her well-educated children. Oscar hoped his own family with Josephine as mother would have the same good reputation. In addition he admired her adorable appearance, naive sincerity, never wavering attention, soft image & religion.]¹⁷

[Oscar's letter to his old teacher Lemoine:] "The family-virtues and the personal qualities of the young princess guarantee a happy marriage. "Josephine, raised far from this world's noise and with simple habits, is well educated, has an angel's touch and shall through character and upbringing become a true Swedish princess to thrive in a country, in which luxury is replaced by probity."¹⁸

Oscar stayed the week. Perhaps they spoke further to each other, perhaps not. On August 31 he continued his journey to the Verona Conference. Meanwhile, Baron von Stedingk returned to Stockholm to obtain government approval and returned with a piece of amethyst jewellery on top of the engagement ring. Count Löwenhielm visited the King of Bavaria, who also approved the marriage plans. The marriage contract was confirmed at the Bavarian privy Council of September 13, 1822.¹⁹ There are supposed to have been objections that the de Beauharnais was not a reigning or even dethroned royal house. I have not been able to locate them, perhaps they were oral or letters to the editor. However, no one was prepared to make an issue of it.

The problem was that Eugène's prince title did not belong to a ruling dynasty but was a personal honorary title. The same with Josephine's princesses title. In 1810-1814, her father was recognized as the heir to the short-lived Grand Duchy of Frankfurt. In October 1813, the Prince-Bishop von Dalberg abdicated in favour of Eugène, and until April 1814, when the duchy was abolished (=mediatized) Eugène was *de jure* if not *de facto* Grand Duke. Josephine's curriculum vitae tends rather to emphasize that she was heir princess of Bavaria. The reason for this was that Bavaria 1713-1818 had a cognatic succession, the so-called "Pragmatische Sanktion". In the marriage contract, she renounced her rights to succession. Other royal ancestry was that her grandmother's grandmother's grandmother was the granddaughter of Gustav Vasa.²⁰ More simply put: Frederick VI of Baden-Durlach in Josephine's family had married

¹⁶ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 116. [Löwenhielms rapport till Karl Johan.]

¹⁷ Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 116-117. [Oscars brev till Karl Johan.]

¹⁸ Müller 1873: s. 64. I: Lemoine 1844: s. 448.

¹⁹ Protokoll i svensk-norskt statsråd, 1822-09-13. [Riksarkivet. Utrikesdepartementets arkiv, serien: Hemliga och särskilda protokoll, volym 1:19.]

²⁰ N.N. 1823.

Charles X's sister Christina, granddaughter of Gustav Vasa. Josephine's mother was also related to King Gustaf IV's wife, which was however not emphasized.

While Oscar was in Italy, negotiations were under way between Eugène and the counts Löwenhielm & Wetterstedt. It concerned time, place, money, rituals, etc. A total of 40 paragraphs. There was some drama. First, the bishop of Munich forbade the marriage because of Josephine's tender age. Then the Cardinal of Vienna allowed them to become engaged, but the wedding had to wait. Finally, the Vatican allowed the marriage to be concluded on February 14, 1823, but that Oscar had to wait for his marital rights until the following year.²¹ Josephine also had to give an assurance not to influence her children in the Catholic direction. However, she was allowed to keep her own religion. Both Charles John and Eugène were religiously indifferent. Eugène believed the same of his daughter: "My daughter is religious, devoted to her religion, but not fanatic." Since Charles John in his letters to Eugène had waived the requirement of religion & the Parliament had allowed Desirée to retain hers, it was in any case not possible to demand a conversion. Finally, as far as Josephine's wealth was concerned, Eugène kept control of the majority. Josephine received her dowry but the rest had to wait until 1851, when her mother died.

On his return from Italy, Oscar spent November 3-19 in Eichstädt with visits to the surroundings, wild boar hunting, theatre, singing, banquets, dancing, etc. The supervision was lax. The final negotiations on the marriage contract were ongoing. Every morning Oscar visited Josephine's room "and gave me some memory, and I too gave him a few things". The Duke's signature took place on November 15. Josephine: "The prince waited for me [afterwards] in 'le cabinet de toilette' [the makeup room of the court theatre], where he handed me his portrait, mounted in diamonds; then we were engaged for real." The play was *The Sleepwalker*, a comedy by Scribe. Oscar and Josephine played the love couple. The final minute of the play they confirmed their engagement through "a kiss with everyone looking on". The audience cried, applauded and cheered.²²

The King of Bavaria's signature had to wait until November 25. Oscar returned to Sweden on December 23, 1822. The couple exchanged letters, but Josephine's have disappeared. Oscars' glowing love phrases remain. In the spring, Eugène suffered a stroke but recovered enough to surrender the bride at the Catholic ceremony at the chapel of the Leuchtenberg Palace on May 22, 1823. It was done by proxy. Oscar was represented by her maternal uncle Prince Charles of Bavaria, the King of Bavaria was represented by his prime minister, Charles John was represented by the Paris envoy Count Gustaf Löwenhielm.

Two days later Josephine started her trip to Sweden. She was accompanied by Eugène's adjutant colonel Count Tascher de la Pagerie and her maid Bertha Zück. Until Lübeck also by her chief maid & governess. The house priest Lorentz Studach had travelled in advance. In Lübeck, Josephine met Queen Desirée & received a Swedish entourage of countesses Aurora Brahe & Mariana Koskull. After 10 days on ship of the line Charles XIII she was rowed ashore June 13 at Manila at southern Djurgården. About the trip is only told that the surroundings were a little surprised that she had a doll with her.²³ On June 19 they were married in Storkyrkan according to the special ceremonials used at royal weddings. With its ancient traditions, it was not as contentious as a protestant wedding. Josephine fell on her

²¹ Lundbäck 1943: s. 43. [Okänd källa.]

²² Palmstierna 1939: s. 474; Nohrenius & Wiklund 2012: s. 193.

²³ Girod de l'Ain 1960: s. 209.

knees in front of the archbishop, who blessed the marriage. Then there was a honeymoon & festivities until her father's death on February 21, 1824.