

Chapter 27 : "The Princess of the Suffering" (1830-1889).

Princess Charlotta Eugenia (Eugénie) Augusta Amalia Albertina of Sweden-Norway, "Nitsa" in the family circle, was born at Stockholm castle on April 24, 1830. The title "Princess of the Suffering" came from her extensive charity.

There is a longer biography in two versions (Hagen 1929 & 1950) and several short biographies (NFB 1881; Cronman 1889; Sandell 1890; Almén 1893: ss. 271-276; SBHL 1906; NFB 1907; Hagen 1939; Hildebrand 1953; Elgklou 1978; Ohlmarks 1979: ss. 104-105; Åberg 1987; Elgklou 1995: ss. 69-70; Skott 1996: ss. 195-202; Sundberg 2004: s. 218; Bratberg 2009; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 45-46; Norlin 2015: ss. 110-113).

Other "biographies" focus on her art (Wieselgren 1867: ss. 45-46; Press 1975; Alm 1987; Widman 1991: ss. 60-62; Westerlund 2007; Hallgren 2016), charity (Lindström 1989; Lindström 1990: ss. 30-43; Åberg 1995; Holm 1997; Hagberg 2007) & religion (von Bergen 1889; Ekman 1896: Part III, ss. 2487-2851; Landberg 1940; Svedlund 1966: ss. 79-82; Sehlstedt 1981: ss. 110-113). Eugénie also appears as a secondary character in biographies and memories (Wennström 1873; De Geer 1892; Edholm 1906; Lindbæk 1910; Dardel 1911; Edholm 1919; Edholm 1944; Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944). A selection of letters & "interviews" have been published (Wadström 1897; and others).

The biographies share the fact that they divide her life into before-after 1858/59 when several for her life crucial changes occurred: Her father died, she recovered after a long illness, the restrictions on home preaching (the Conventicle Act) were cancelled & unmarried woman over the age of 25, she could request to be declared of age and thus free to dispose of their wealth. Eugénie is alleged to have been first in the country with the application.¹ However, it took until 1861 to be granted.

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The first few years Eugénie was raised with the brothers. For some unexplained reason, probably a pedagogical experiment by her grandfather, he seems to have exposed her mother to the same thing, she was not allowed to a doll but had to participate in the brothers war games where she sometimes performed close order drill & sometimes fought. The brothers' teacher Aubert thought that she was like a little "Achilles" where she romped about.² Eugénie afterwards had mixed feelings about this her upbringing:

During my childhood years I never had a young girl as a friend or playmate. Nor did I ever have a doll, but played exclusively with the brothers, among whom I had great respect for my eldest brother. I always had to obey him, however reluctantly, because a girl having an opinion or a will of her own, was considered unthinkable. As a toddler, I sometimes imagined how happy those children would be, who could play freely and at some point do what they themselves wanted, and I wished that I had not been - princess.

My happiest childhood memories are connected to the summers at Tullgarn. There we could ignore at least part of the court life restrictions and live more freely. The

¹ De Geer 1892: del 1, s. 177; Hagen 1929: s. 65.

² Lindbæk 1910: s. 77. [Brev från Otto Aubert till hemmet, 1835-07-22.]

princes built fortresses out in the park, we played war and captured them. I was then also a warrior, sometimes General, sometimes a simple soldier, and revealed as much courage and bravery as any of the brothers. Perhaps it is these many boys games during my youth, that prevented me from becoming female at heart [added the gentle princess, who in true *femininity* would have few peers. She then continued:] "At Tullgarn I was also allowed to walk around in the fields and the forest and botanize with my brother Gustaf. We were both extremely interested in botany, collected a large number of flowers and had quite beautiful herbariums. It broke my heart when these went lost in the conflagration at Tullgarn in the early 1850s."³

In 1843, she accompanied the rest of the family on a trip abroad where her father tried to patch up his marriage after the end of his relationship with mistress Emilie Höggqvist. The following year her grandfather Charles John died. Eugénie remembered with regret what it was like to sit on his knees and listen to stories of war, blood, death, festivities & honour.

At school, the garçonerie was over. Eugénie got a governess, the Norwegian lady-in-waiting Karen Annette Anker (1804-1862; employed 1828-1854), from 1845 (?) at Eugénies court. In addition to Anker, Eugénie shared teachers with her brothers but did not participate in their teaching. The one who has been most noted in this connection is court preacher Johan Gustaf Lundberg (1800-1880). Anker & Lundberg are said to have been powerful people who together "contributed to developing the trait of conscious self-denigrating that came to be characteristic of Princess E."⁴ Difficult to determine what is meant. Possibly the passive ideals of women of the time were imprinted. Others have described it as having grafted a modicum of humility into the midst of all royal conceit. There is no depiction of Eugénie as a downtrodden teenager. On the contrary, she is consistently described as happy, friendly, outgoing, pleasure-hungry, spoiled & sarcastic.

A princesses' lot is to be married off. In 1846-1852, some proposals were discussed, unclear how serious they were: Napoleon III, Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia and an unknown Danish prince. Josephine was in favour of Napoleon III but Oscar I was against it, when his throne was so uncertain. King Oscar I was in favour of a marriage to Prince Frederick, who belonged to an esteemed dynasty, but Josephine was opposed because of his renown brutality. Eugénie herself was not very keen. The royal marriages in her vicinity - Desirée, Josephine & Lovisa - discouraged. In 1844 and 1852 she was seriously ill. No merit in these contexts. Eugénie's comment long after was: "I bless the memory of my father, who, while I was still young and healthy, did not force me to marry any despotic prince, who would have destroyed my independent life."⁵

Eugénie's school curriculum is unclear, but she learned at least German, French, and became interested in literature, art, and music. The performance was at the hobby level. 1847-1853 there are lots of small sketches and watercolours with motifs from everyday life in all its guises.⁶ They are "snap shots" in a style resembling Fritz von Dardel's. You look in vain for any political interest, personal expression or even awareness that the outside world existed. Eugénie also composed, although she never achieved the same skill as her brother Gustaf. In 1859 she was elected 1st Honorary Member of the Academy of Music. In this capacity, she awarded scholarships to the needy. The most famous of her scholars was Amalia Riégo

³ Sandell 1890: ss. 53-54; Hagen 1929: s. 6-9.

⁴ Hildebrand 1953.

⁵ Wadström 1897: del 1, ss. 108-111; Press 1975: ss. 11-12.

⁶ Alm 1987; Bengtsson, Eva-Lena. Recension. Valör, 1987:10: ss. 42-45.

(1850-1926). In 1873 she became an honorary member of the Academy of Arts. There, too, she awarded scholarships.

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*On Judgement day, no one will ask us
what we have read, but what we have done.*
Thomas à Kempis. The Imitation of Christ, Book II,
Chapter 7.

*"See, I think we should seek to think and live so that
we could as well be in a home of crystal, where all
mankind can see our actions and hear our words."*
Eugénie Bernadotte, Princess of Sweden and Norway.

Eugénie was confirmed on October 25, 1845. Her mother had vowed not to influence the religious orientation of her children, but gave her (through the confirmation priest) a copy of Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*. In addition, Eugénie's religious library consisted of the Old Testament (a confirmation present) but no copy of the New Testament. She looked forward to the Sunday sermons because she then had to play organ & sing in choir. She did not show any interest in religion until Anker was succeeded by Baroness Josephine Hamilton (1834-1861; lady-in-waiting 1854-1857; 1857 m. Rudbeck). Hamilton was a revivalist and she and Eugénie devoted much time to Bible studies. This was in contrast to Eugénie's confirmation priest Butsch. He had warned her to "only rarely, and in moderation, read that book [the Bible], because I would not be able to interpret it correctly without guidance; and a misunderstanding could easily make me a Reader or lead me astray." Thomas à Kempis was alright however. Eugénie claimed to have read à Kempis rather carefully but apparently she tired of the message that grace must be earned by hard work. More convenient to have it handed on a silver platter in the spirit of the Christian revival movement. Hamilton tried to persuade Eugénie to invite like-minded people to their biblical studies, which happened, but not openly until the Conventicle Act was repealed in 1858. Eugénie seems to have professed some form of pietism. In any case, she renounced dancing & attending the theater.⁷ It has not been possible to determine the timing of her revival. It appears to have taken place gradually between 1854 and 1861. She gathered a small clique of like-minded women around her for singing, drinking coffee & listening to invited preachers:

The teachers and priests that she listened to in the circle of her friends represented many different directions of religious opinion and belief - Bring, Beskow, Boström, Fjellstedt, Kolmodin, Kerfstedt, Landgren, Ljungman, Lindström, Neander, [Radstock,] Rudin, Sandberg, Wadström - but she averted discussions or disputations on purely theological matters.⁸

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The disease in 1844 was a severe cold. The disease in 1852 was more serious. She and her brother August had accompanied Gustaf & father on the trip to Germany and all four fell ill on their return home. Gustaf died. It is likely that they suffered the same illness. Gustaf & Eugénie were diagnosed with "gastric nerve fever" - possibly a salmonella infection.

⁷ Wadström 1897: del 1, ss. 97-108.

⁸ Hagen 1929: s. 73.

Alternative diagnoses have included "typhoid fever" (or something similar), "pneumonia with with severe kidney disease"⁹, "jaundice with liver complications"¹⁰, "chest pain" & bleeding ulcers. According to some accounts, Eugénie was also paralysed in one foot, which would indicate Guillain-Barré syndrome or a blood clot. However, it is unclear whether the paralysis was permanent. Her health never recovered. She shut herself in, pondered her future & seems to have suffered from a depression. In the meantime, her father's mental faculties deteriorated & July 8, 1859, he died. Eugénie was by then physically exhausted & completely torn up by grief. The physician Magnus Huss recommended her to spend the rest of the summer on Gotland. It was the beginning of a new and better life. I give him the floor:

Among my princely patients, Princess Eugénie occupies the main place given the long time, during which I had the confidence to be her doctor. My first acquaintance as a doctor with the princess was in 1844 at the time of King Oskar I's coronation. She was then 14 years old and had so recently had measles, that the scaling was still ongoing. Her participation in the coronation ceremony in the church during a cold and terrible weather strongly affected the princess's state of health; after this time it became more or less faltering.

Recurring lung infections, alternating with digestive disorders, were soon her constant companions. The first outbreak of the severe suffering, which then several times threatened her life, occurred the following year, towards the end of 1852, when frequent blood vomiting made evident that she suffered from ulcers in her stomach. - As I at this time was staying abroad, she was cared for by d:r G. Böttiger. The following year I nursed her myself, during which the condition several times was on the verge of ending her life, as a result of her vomiting large quantities of blood. As a result of this and the impossibility of her retaining food, she rapidly lost weight. Neither was it possible to maintain an adequate air exchange. I therefore believed that a stay in the country, preferably on the sea coast, for example on Gotland, should be beneficial to her as a last resort; ...

I fondly remember Princess Eugénie; I have never nurtured anyone who submitted herself to such suffering and torments in a manner more befitting a Christian; trusting in God.¹¹

I do not think, however, that Eugénie's humility should be taken at face value. She was often too exhausted to act the princess - but that she nevertheless was and woe if you forgot it. Eugénie, like all royalty, had a good memory for such details. Later she made a thing of humility by signing her letters with "the handmaiden of the downtrodden", "the humblest employee in the vineyard" and the like. That said, she lived in a luxury furnished four-room apartment at the castle and had a court of 12 people to do her bidding. Her meals, however, were simple and consisted of eggs, broth, vegetables & water. The diet and blood loss made her thin and look older than her years. She was often bedridden. According to von Dardel "almost lame". The lack of exercise made her so weak that she later in life had to be borne.

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1859 & -60 Eugénie was a guest at the farm of consul Lars Niclas Enequist at Länna just south of Visby.¹² The climate suited her & she liked the surroundings. In 1860, she bought a

⁹ Elgklou 1978: s. 66 & 126.

¹⁰ Cronman 1889: s. 30. [Enligt en hovbulletin.]

¹¹ Huss 1891: ss. 70-71.

¹² Sandell 1890 [1859 & -60]; Hagen 1929 [1859 & -60]; Press 1975 [1860 & -61].

seaside lot Fridhem not far away. In 1861/63, she had built a Swiss-style house and some utility houses. Later she added a park. Eugénie recuperated and held court: "The visits followed one another - royalty, excellences, courtiers, poets, artists, musicians, clergymen, officials, young students and not least people from Fridhem's neighbourhood – whether they be neighbouring farmers, hired hands or fishermen from Buske. The princess appreciated fraternizing. Fridhem was open to all."¹³

Eugénie's artistic activities had been suspended during the illness, but in 1860 she resumed it. She made small sculptures in clay & plasticine, some of which were reproduced in parian porcelain and sold through Rörstrand and/or Gustafsberg porcelain factory.

Because also her lady-in-waiting Adèle Rudenschöld (1832-1923; employed 1866-1889) modelled there is some confusion about who did what. Nordisk Familjebook¹⁴ ascribes Eugénie *A Norwegian horn blower, Swedish guardsman, Faith* and a number of *Apostles*. Rudenschöld modelled child and animal studies in a completely different sentimental style. At the beginning of the 1990s there was a discussion on the subject. It turned out that Rudenschöld had plagiarized the Englishman Rowland James Morris (1842?-1898) composition *Can't you speak*. Her name was *Boy with dog*. Both were reproduced by Gustafsberg and belonged to the most popular. There is a photograph of them.¹⁵

Eugénie also resumed her musical activities and published some compositions that received friendly reviews, but few have survived. A hymn "How strange, Lord, you bring your bride" is still included in the free church repertoire. In 2011, a CD was published with what appears to be her 13 most successful pieces, including the aforementioned hymn. She wrote poetry for her circle of friends, sometimes published under the pseudonym E***.

Eugenie was very fond of children - probably because she could then drop some of the royal dignity - and there are many stories about her lively children's parties. Among other things, she had a slide installed in her apartment. Later, she amused the nephews with puppet shows, slide shows & physical experiments. During Christmas time, Santa distributed presents. Fridhem was even livelier, where the slide was soaped & an appreciated game was to bury her hay until only the head showed.

As an unmarried Bernadotte princess at a disadvantage, Eugénie had a need to define & assert her position. In 1864 she published a volume of princess biographies of the Vasa family.¹⁶ These were written in French but translated. The idea seems to have been to show that the royal house consisted not only of kings and princes but also of queens and princesses. The same year, she published a translation of Magnus Friedrich Roos (1779) "The School of the Cross or How a Christian should behave during the suffering". It is a book of edification on how to maintain one's Christian faith despite war, death, disease, suffering and deprivation. The circumstances surrounding the translation are unknown, but the year 1864 suggests that it would be distributed in connection with the Swedish intervention in the Danish-German War.

Eugénie is best known for her charity. Here she copied her mother, but on a larger scale. Her involvement varied. Some associations she directed in detail as chairman and/or by decree.

¹³ Press 1975: s. 62.

¹⁴ NFB 1881.

¹⁵ Expressen 1989-08-13; Dagens Nyheter, 1995-12-12.

¹⁶ prinsessan Eugénie 1864a & 1864b.

Others she only protected (=spoke well of). The lack of suitable premises meant that the meetings often took place at the castle (winter time) or at Fridhem (summer time). The rank and file were rewarded through socializing & coffee. There is no information that Eugénie read social policy literature, but she had many advisers. Where possible, "help to help oneself" was the order of the day:

- In 1863 she initiated Visby & Västerhejde protection associations for work for women in need. The "guardians" handed out wool, yarn & cloth that the women spun, wove, sew and knitted and the guardians then bought and distributed to the needy. In 1863 she built a school and an old people's home. In 1867/69 she built a home for the terminally ill in Visby.
- In 1862, she "inherited" baroness Anna Koskull's orphanage for girls in Stockholm. In 1868, she moved the business to nearby Fridtorp where 30 girls and boys went to school and learned a trade. In 1876, she in the same manner "inherited" Princess Sofia Albertina's "Charitable Women's Society".
- Eugenie was also interested in (=helped raise money for) other activities: Visby stadsmission, Visby husskola, Visby slöjdskola, Visby barnhem, Drottning Desiderias skola, Gotlands sedlighetsförening, Sällskapet Pauvre-honteux i Visby, Gotländska föreningen för de blindas väl, Understödsföreningen för Gotlands västkustfiskare, etc.
- The hospice in Visby was followed up with an equivalent in Stockholm, Eugeniahemmet, to "provide housing, care and maintenance for poor, incurably ill and disfigured children from both the capital and the rest of Sweden". This came to be 1879-1888, in several stages: First the children were ordered out. In 1882 they rented premises in Sundberg for 32 children. In 1886, the Norrbackainstitut was inaugurated for 60-70 children. In 1888, she set up an old people's home for the blind, not far away.
- She also supported Fjellstedtska skolan in Uppsala. This was a secondary school for future priests, founded in 1862. It also established, on Eugénies' initiative, the support association "Friends of the Same Mission" in 1880. In 1888, the university financed an orphanage and school in Lannavaara. The association was conceived as a continuation of Queen Lovisa's "Five-Movement Association" with the same goal.
- Further activities were the Luther Seminar in Kristiania, the Heathen & Seamen Mission, the animal welfare associations & individual help for the needy.

In this way, Eugenie, to the horror of her brothers, disposed of more than half of her wealth. On April 23, 1889, she died of a minor infection. Probably her heart couldn't take it any more. No major regret was expressed during the court's memorial service. Eugénie disappeared into oblivion. Her legacy was written by fellow Christians Lina Sandell and Ellen Hagen. Feminist Elin Wägner commented on Hagen's biography:

If one had a general idea of Princess Eugénie as a sickly, religious, charitable, elderly lady with shiny well combed hair, long-suffering face and a big brooch, it is now gone. Here is a memorable woman, beautiful, richly talented, full of vigour, versed in the ways outside the court circles and with a wide ranging goodness, even towards the Duchess of Dalarna. The only significant female member of the Bernadotte family so far.

... but the depiction [nevertheless] gives a profoundly sad aftertaste. Is it not cruel that here among us lived a beautiful, in her youth healthy and passionate woman, who thought of marriage and motherhood as being exported to Germany! A princess who

never fell in love - at least admitted to such - with any of the decent, talented beautiful men with whom she danced, played, read aloud or held board meetings! ... And it's cruel that this budding artist never got to practice her art in earnest - that it could have paid off if you see on the watercolours and drawings ...

Even in her social work, this really interested person could not be anything but an amateur. Propelled by compassion, she lived to care for the victims of this social machinery of ours, those lacking hope. This was not a minor or inadequate act, quite the contrary. However, a wise and affectionate person usually wants to change the cause of all this, not only alleviate individual suffering. But that road was closed to her, because of her sex and position.¹⁷

The conclusion is probably that Hagen, by redacting Eugénie's world view, her poor health & the environments hostile attitude to religious freedom, social work & emancipation, made her incomprehensible. Eugénie did what she could & thought proper. She was probably not as talented as Wägner wants us to believe, but she was stubborn & a good "politician". The collaboration between the royal house and the Christian revival movement continued through her nephew Oscar Bernadotte, his wife Ebba Munck and their children. It was to last over 100 years. Not bad by a bed-ridden virgin.

¹⁷ Wägner, Elin. Historien om prinsessan Eugenie. Tidevarvet, 1929(7):50, s. 4.