

Chapter 74 : Jeanne de Tramcourt (1875-1952).

Oakhill on Djurgården was once an artist colony of rather run-down wooden houses. One of these was rented by the sculptor etc. Christian Eriksson, who was married to French woman Jeanne de Tramcourt, later Wilhelm's mistress. It is possible that she and Wilhelm met when he in the spring of 1907 acquired the site to have his villa built. They later met in Paris. The first time they spoke was at an officer's ball in 1914 in Nynäshamn where she attended as chaperon to her 17-year-old daughter Kajsa. The timing is unclear but it should have been the cadet ball at the end of the spring term. Wilhelm's divorce from Maria Pavlovna had come into effect but his torpedo boat service in Skåne had not yet begun. As Jeanne tells the story, it was "un coup de foudre" and they spent the night at the railway hotel.

Jeanne later wrote an autobiographical sketch and the correspondence between her and Wilhelm has been published (Andhé red. 1971). Its history is unclear. Jeanne bequeathed the letters to her daughter Kajsa (1888-1983), who waited with publishing until Wilhelm had died. Further information about the relation can be found in the "Stenhammar" literature, mainly in Alice Lyttkens autobiography (1980: ss. 110-111), and in the chronicles (Elgklou 1978: s. 171; Skott 1996: ss. 244-245, 248; Sundberg 2004: s. 249; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 100-101; Norlin 2015: ss. 202-204).

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Jeanne Leocadie [Adelaide Battistine de] Tramcourt was born on 9 December 1875 in Tracy sur Loire, a small town in central France, the daughter of stonemason Charles Tramcourt - a specialist in gravestones of the more complicated variety - and his wife Adele. The names in brackets are probably taken. From 1894 to 1911, she was married to the Swedish sculptor etc. Christian Eriksson with whom she had five children: Jean Christophe (1895), Kajsa (1896), Elof (1897), Sven (1900) and Matts (1905). The couple first lived in Paris but in 1896 moved to the artist colony Rackstad outside Arvika and in 1898 to Stockholm. Jeanne kept house, decorated and was known for her charm, beauty, singing voice and cooking. The marriage seems to have come about so that Jeanne was a model for Christian and he in that context seduced her or the reverse. They divorced September 20, 1911. Jeanne claimed that they did not fit well together and that she had tried to leave him several times. "But he always managed to track me down and I was returned to the home..." It is probably to be interpreted that when the marriage felt difficult she took the children to the parents in Paris. Further explanations for the divorce were that she had grown tired of her life as an "artist's kitchen maid" and that she did not want any more children but that he refused to use a condom.¹ The fact that Jeanne had a very beautiful body and probably was capable of turning the head of anyone can be studied on the husband's 1902 sculpture of her and Archbishop Nathan Söderblom at the entry to Sundsvallsbanken, Fredsgatan 4 in Stockholm.

It seems that after the divorce, Jeanne had an affair with a wealthy Frenchman who bought her a summer villa on the Riviera - alternatively she inherited. She ambulated between Paris and Stockholm and ran a small fashion company for hats and other accessories. There is an oil painting of her from 1914 by Carl Larsson where he emphasizes her elegant posture, clear-cut features and amused superior smile. She seemed out of place in Swedish reality. An artist acquaintance likened her to "an orchid in a potato field". In 1920 she appeared in Carl Dreyer's film *Leaves from Satan's book* where she played French noblewoman. But back to that night in Nynäshamn...

¹ Bonnier 1972: s. 27.

I walked by myself through the great ballroom during a dance break. I had a long black taffeta dress with three flounces. I had no rings or other jewellery... Suddenly Prince Wilhelm appeared... and he walked straight towards me who tried to look unnoticed. I had everyone's eyes fixed on me, I felt scared and trembling... The conversation was made more difficult by the music. The prince wondered if I wanted to dance and as I did not dare to reject his invitation, I danced out in the ballroom with my cavalier. I saw in a mirror how small I was next to him. He had to bend down to follow me in the dance. He asked if I often danced. I answered that I preferred to see others dance. He then suggested that we sit down on the porch ... Can it be a glass of champagne? He asked. I understood that he liked champagne so I accepted the proposal ... The two of us had half a bottle of champagne! We suddenly felt united by fate. The great sympathy, the trust that we felt for each other, all the sorrows we had gone through ... We both wanted to give our lives to help each other and capture happiness. Our eyes were filled with great tears that we tried to hide. ... it was a "coup de foudre" for both of us.²

Regardless of this "bolt of lightning", the relationship was fraught with complications. Victoria liked her son's mésalliance even less than her brother-in-law Oscar's relationship with Ebba Munck and first tried to avert it, then pretended it did not exist. The naval commandments made the relationship on and off. There is an undated letter, possibly from 1916, where they stayed at Hotel Siljansborg in Rättvik and Victoria or Gusty sent their chamberlain, possibly lord chamber Carl Rosenblad, to urge them to be more discreet. Wilhelm bowed to the situation and Jeanne went back to Stockholm.

Before and after the war Wilhelm travelled extensively that he documented in books and later also in films. In 1911/12 he was with his wife in Thailand. In 1913/14 he hunted in Kenya. In 1920, he accompanied an ethnographic-archeological expedition to Guatemala and the Yucatán Peninsula. In 1920/21 he was on a safari in Uganda, Congo and Sudan on behalf of the Swedish Museum of Natural History. In Congo, he fell ill with malaria and was close to dying. His journeys were partly done with his own money and on his return from Congo in 1921 his finances were poor. Meanwhile, Jeanne travelled between London, Paris, Rome, Copenhagen, seaside resorts and Stockholm. It's not clear how she made a living, but maybe she had an allowance. Other hypotheses include that of her fashion company, an inheritance, or that Wilhelm shared her with somebody else.

Shortly before Christmas 1922, Wilhelm suddenly broke off the connection on the grounds that "it was ultimately only the carnal that drew me to You" and that she distracted him from his work.³ It seems an almost exact repetition of the conflict with his wife Maria Pavlovna. The correspondence continued though. Jeanne suspected a rival and her letters were some time quite bitter. However, she was more accustomed to artist natures and their peculiarities than Maria so the relationship resumed in 1924. Wilhelm's economy had now improved to the degree that he was able to acquire a villa in the mountain village of Eze - Château Eza, now a hôtel - not far from Jeanne's villa in Nice and he hired her son Sven as an architect during the renovation. In December 1925, Jeanne moved house to Eze. Wilhelm was overjoyed. In 1927, he was twice in America on lecture tours to finance a tasteful interior design for the place.

² Andhé 1971: ss. 9-10.

³ Andhé 1971: ss. 97-98.

The interest in the lecture tour was very great - his brother had been over the year before - and Wilhelm easily filled premises with up to three thousand people.

Jeanne never met Victoria but actually had lunch several times with Gustaf. She never received any official recognition, but from 1932 she lived at Stenhammar. Wilhelm had actually offered to marry her, but she declined the proposal because she did not want to become a new Mrs. Simpson. Gustaf had also made his position clear - they would never get his permission and if they married anyway, Wilhelm like his son Lennart would lose all his royal privileges - his title, his appanage, Stenhammar - and be thrown out of the family. The only royal who did not actively avoid her was Prince Eugen.

Wilhelm's literary "Stenhammar"-clique thought Jeanne was rather lightweight and they too avoided her. Her lack of high birth was a problem even for labour writers who interpreted the relationship as reverse snobbery. For a time, Wilhelm and Jeanne were known as "the sailor prince and his indentured maid". Jeanne repaid the contempt in spades and actually managed to get some of the clique ostracized. As a hostess, she abolished the "red day"—the annual crayfish party with its boozing - but it was reinstated after her death. The servants treated her with disrespect, but that seems to have improved.

With time Jeanne became very frail. January 2, 1952, she, Wilhelm and a female companion were on their way home from a visit. It snowed heavily and Wilhelm kept low speed, 25 km/h but still managed to collide with a stone marker. Jeanne was thrown towards the dashboard and died of internal injuries. The other two survived without injuries.