

## Appendix : Charles XV's Women & Poetry.

*Window open, let me in.  
Everything adorned for me.  
Girl is waiting;  
Feast for love.*

*No more shackles  
breasts be bared.  
Mouth be roses.  
Shoes be off!*

*Maybe squabble  
who shall win.  
Come alive by stubborn strife,  
but let languor in the end prevail.*

*World may shout,  
me fool for love,  
give me lasses breast no less,  
kissing them will make me wise.*

From: King Charles XV: Pre and  
After (unknown year).<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to narrate what after a source check boils down to almost nothing. There are two tracks in the rumours about Charles' dissolute life. Track 1 is his "wild oats" the bachelor years 1844-1849 when he is supposed to have fathered a large number of children, but with unknown mothers. Track 2 is his assumed adultery 1850-1872. As the story goes, the wife's lady-in-waiting Josephine Sparre (1829-1892; 1862 m. Stang) was outcompeted by the artist Hanna Stjernblad (1842-1904; b. Styrell; 1876 m. Tersmeden), who in turn was outcompeted by the Danish lass Wilhelmine Schröder (1839-1924). This has proved impossible to verify. To bring some semblance of order to the narrative, I organize it under three headings: (A) Contemporary rumours. (B) Biographies of the above mentioned women. (C) Posthumous rumours.

The three most important sources are Dardel (1911), Eriksson (1954) & Michanek (1990): Dardel was employed by the court. Eriksson & Michanek used archives. Fritz von Dardels letters, diaries & memories for 1833-1898 were published in five volumes 1911-1931. Originally they were in French, but were translated into Swedish & edited by the son Nils. It was not a scientific edition. Michanek retranslated some parts concerning Queen Louise that had been redacted – here indicated by square brackets.

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### A. CONTEMPORARY RUMOURS

It has not been possible to find any allusions to Charles's love life inside or outside marriage in the contemporary press, but there is supposed to exist a woodcut of Hanna Stjernblad,

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<sup>1</sup> Michanek 1990: ss. 55-56.

dating from 1862, and popular newspapers such as *Jul-Glöggen*, *Jul-Grisen*, *Ny Illustrerad Tidning*, *Frihetsvännen* & *Kasper* joked about Charles' way with women. 1872-1898, four collections of anecdotes were published (Rydberg 1872; Caroliana 1889; Berättelser 1897; Nilsson 1898). None of them contain any sexual allusions, but Charles allegedly suggested such to his nearest circle of acquaintances. Which begs the question how it became common knowledge. It seems to have been word of mouth: Every year he celebrated midsummer with his regiment, when he danced with the soldier's & the officers' girlfriends & acquaintances; he also socialized with artists and their girlfriends & acquaintances; and finally his love poems. Until his death, Charles wrote several hundred of them addressed to Hanna Stjernblad and other muses, which he recited to acquaintances and had printed and distributed. The poems were published in 1858, 1862, 1863 & 1865 and translated into Danish, English, German & French. Charles's posthumous reputation as a local stallion therefore seems unfair but self-inflicted. There are two novels based on this his imaginary love life (Kerfve 1897; Meijer-Granqvist (1918).

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A sample from the writings of Dardel, Eriksson & Charles' minister Louis de Geer:

*December 13, 1890.* The day before yesterday, we invited three elderly ladies who for various periods, all were loved or at least celebrated by Charles XV, namely the widows Sigrid Cederström [b. Sparre], Stani Eketrä and Aurore Palin. The former was Queen Josephine's maid of honour, first love of the then eighteen-year-old crown prince and who inspired his first poetry. The Queen (according to the son's belief), following to the advice of her confessor Studach, interrupted this love story before it came to fruition, and the blue-eyed Sigrid was banned from the court, in spite of the protests and grief of her beloved prince. This was never forgiven. A few years later, Sigrid Sparre married an honourable man, the naval officer Baron Thure Cederström, who was previously companion to the younger princes. The other two ladies were also subject to the princes' fiery feelings, and have kept him in dear memory.<sup>2</sup>

Sigrid Sparre (1825-1910; 1852 m. Cederström; maid of honour 1845-1850). Charles had courted her and written love poems. Queen Josephine thought it best for everybody that she left when Charles got married.

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Eriksson managed in Bernhard von Beskow's and others surviving papers to find three demi-mondes who possibly had practised their arcane arts with Charles: Sigrid "Wild Cat" who allegedly chewed Carl's copy of *Flygare-Carlén* to pulp, Ewardina Gernandt "beautiful so it hurt, and by the mother long-saved for this [?] purpose", Laura Ståhlberg with unknown merits.<sup>3</sup> It has not been possible to verify their existence, but of course Charles can, during the military exercises & his relations with artist friends, have met most anybody without it being documented. More women are mentioned, but the information is meagre. Apart from dancing with them, speaking to them or having them as dinner partners, nothing is known.

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<sup>2</sup> Dardel 1911: del 5, ss. 131-132.

<sup>3</sup> Eriksson 1954: ss. 163-164.

In 1892, Charles's minister Louis De Geer published his *Memories*, in which he included a cryptic, later often quoted, assessment of Charles's character: "The general public does not like saints. On the contrary, it flatters them to see their own errors and vices shared by royals. Honesty and openness, on the other hand, are loved by everyone, and no one has with greater talent than he played this role. His utter complacency to cover up, what one would think him most anxious to hide, made it almost impossible to believe him to hide anything else, and one would have to be very close in order to realize that; - but the public was not."<sup>4</sup>

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## B. WOMEN

### B1. Josephine Sparre

Josephine Sparre af Söfdeborg (1829-1892; 1862 m. Stang). "Jossan" or "Schossan" as she was often called was 1851-1859 maid of honour, 1859-1862 maid of the bedchamber and 1864-1871 lady-in-waiting of Queen Louise. She grew up in Norway. In 1862, she married the chamberlain of the Norwegian court Count Bredo Henrik von Munthe of Morgonstjerne Stang.

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Josephine Sparre is mentioned in Fritz von Dardels *Memories* part 1 (1911) as a coquette but with a positive influence on Charles's sobriety:

*July 23, 1857.* The poor man [Carsten Anker (1817-1898), Norwegian officer & chamberlain] is here daily forced to meet his former love Josephine S., whose heart he once managed to win, but who, after entertaining him ten years with vain hopes, finally left him. Although he now claims to have been completely cured for his passion, he complains a great deal about the former subject, so I do not believe it to be completely extinct. The lady in question is a great favourite of both the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess, and has them entirely in her thrall in everything that concerns their daily lives. Gifted with an unusual ability to charm and to make herself indispensable, she has managed to completely captivate the crown prince, whom she holds in constant anticipation, playing with his emotions as the cat with the rat. Sometimes whimsical, narrow and pretentious, she can, when she so wishes, be good, loving and caring. This manner, which would tire other natures, enlivens the prince, who finds little pleasure in the predictable. He seems to enjoy this constant fever and in it find his greatest bliss. By refusing to grant her royal worshippers any significant favour, she has come to appear in his eyes a form of saint, which may also explain that the Crown Princess suffers her, something everyone is amazed about. Anker, who has the opportunity to observe this situation at close quarters, seems to have been summoned, in order to rip up old wounds. She treats her former fiancé in the most untroubled way, as if nothing had ever happened between them.

*July 26, [1857]* it was Josephine S's birthday, which the Crown Princess celebrated with a breakfast on Kaninholmen. In the evening, we went on a rowing expedition,

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<sup>4</sup> De Geer 1892: del 2, s. 138.

and upon our return we were received by a song quartet. It was commissioned by the Prince and consisted of Hwasser, Beronius, Arpi and Moberg. They then sang all evening in the park and ended it with a serenade under the beauties window. The crown prince always sings in this choir, and he is proud that during his university time he belonged to the gluntarna [the university choir]. Another victim of Josephine S's coquetry is Oscar Björnstjerna. After she managed to imprison him by her delights, he [1856] requested her hand, which she also granted him, probably finding it to her advantage. The engagement was announced but did not last long. As soon as it came to the matter of marriage, she made so many objections and conditions that he became concerned about what was going on. To bring a fast end to all the talk about the prince's liking for his fiancée he proposed that immediately after the wedding they make a journey to the continent, which would last two years. Josephine, however, did not want to leave Stockholm. The tensions which arose, and which the Crown Prince initially managed to settle, at the time showing perhaps too great a personal interest, finally prompted Björnstjerna, under pressure from his family, to break off the engagement, which at the time caused a great deal of attention. However, it is claimed that he be little cured from his affliction and ready to start all over again. I doubt, however, that she has similar feelings, for she carefully avoids her former worshipper, such as the other day when she, pretending nausea, did not accompany the princess to Drottningholm, where Björnstjerna then was.

*August 5, 1857.* [Crown Princess Louise's birthday, Charles & Josephine Sparre sat next to each other at the same table. As a final toast, Charles suggested] “that they all toast their secret love.“ Prince Oscar, who at first appeared surprised, soon found his cool and, giving his older brother a well-deserved lesson, he turned to his young wife saying: “Sophie, let's toast each other.“ The crown prince, having already emptied his glass, turned to his consort, but it was too late; the battle was already blow was already delivered, and all of us felt hurt by his lack of tact. No one could doubt that his secret love was lady-in-waiting S., who sat there with lowered eyes, red as a peony and seemed more embarrassed than flattered over this tribute.

*June 1861.* Josephine Sparre has at times managed to get him [Charles XV] to completely part with the punch drinking, but if he meets his singers, then her charitable influence in this regard is nil:

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Charles's chief chamberlain Adam Lewenhaupt intensely disliked Josephine Sparre's Norwegian, somewhat relaxed style, from the start and deplored her lack of breeding. With time the aversion increased: “She sucks up to the prince and her eyes never leave him.“ - “She behaves like a wife.“ However, Eriksson's selection of quotes is such that one does not understand what is going on. The intimacy seems to mostly date from 1854 when Charles's son died only 16 months old and he needed comforting. Countess Clara Bonde thought she then was “an angel of God“.<sup>5</sup> Eriksson & later Michanek & Skott shared Lewenhaupt's feelings however and found Queen Louise's leniency with Sparre incomprehensible. “In the eyes of the court it was a strange ménage à trois, in a way symbolically expressed at the military exercise at Ljungbyhed in 1860, when Louise in Charles' gold embroidered hussar's uniform, was

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<sup>5</sup> Eriksson 1954: ss. 164-166.

followed by Josephine Sparre, wearing his adjutant uniform.“<sup>6</sup> However, this is a misquote of Bååth-Holmberg who cites a Scanian newspaper from June 1860 that “it is the young very admired Miss Horn“.<sup>7</sup> Anna Horn (1836-1873; 1866 g. af Harmens; 1859-1866), at the time Louise's maid of honour. Sparre was not the only employee.

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## B2. Hanna Stjernstedt

Hanna Stjernblad (1842-1904; b. Styrell; 1876 m. Tersmeden) is from 1859 mentioned as actor, but her career is not well known. According Dardel ”without being really beautiful, she nonetheless possess a piquant appearance and is gifted with good head and love for art and literature. She is said to have been a member of a travelling theatre troupe, and her first youth quite stormy. Now she has the sense to stay in the background and avoid gossip.”<sup>8</sup>

The relationship between Charles & Hanna began, according to two of Charles's poems “For eleven years“ (1870) & “Thoughts on Okt 21“ (1871), on October 21, 1859. They were talked about. In the summer of 1860, she lived at Bellevue near Ulriksdal Castle, in the summers of 1861-1877 on Vântorp, also near Ulriksdal. In 1866, Charles arranged for the building to be transferred to her. The remainder of the year, she lived in an apartment on Ålandsgatan 13. Hanna's capital (probably an inheritance) gave her SEK 7,500 a year, which was enough for comfort. 1863/64 she lived in Paris, the first of many such visits. Like Emilie Högqvist she hosted a salon.<sup>9</sup>

Come 1865 Charles's passion had supposedly cooled, although the friendship remained. According to Sven Eriksson, he began a new relationship with the Danish lass Wilhelmine Schröder (see below). In 1876 Hanna married Captain Adolf Tersmeden. The following year Tersmeden's two older brothers died and in 1879 Tersmedens father. The family's entailed estate & genealogical title passed to him. Hanna who had started life as a baker's daughter ended up baroness of the Ramnäs estate in Västmanland.

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In 1927 the Selander brothers published their memoirs, which included some gossip about Hanna and also suggested that there were others (Selander & Selander 1927: pp. 14-15):

The longest of his affaires was when the king acquired a “maitresse en titre“ in mamsell Hanna Styrell, who had for some time performed at a small theatre in the Odeon salon at Regeringsgatan. She later ennobled herself to Miss Stjernblad. She was a small, finely formed blonde, rather insignificant-looking, polite, quite reserved and goodnatured. In his usual way, King Charles did nothing to hide the relationship. In the summer Miss Stjernblad lived at Ulriksdal in a villa near the castle. The governor Baron Manderström and other courtiers used to visit her. So did the king. [She was invited to the castle] and they have been seen cheerfully chatting.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Eriksson 1954: s. 167; Michanek 1990: s. 20; Skott 1996: s. 66.

<sup>7</sup> Bååth-Holmberg 1891: ss. 619-620. [Malmö nya tidning & Snällposten 1860-06 beskriver manövern, men inte dessa detaljer.. De förefaller härröra från en veckotidning.]

<sup>8</sup> Dardel 1911: del 4, ss. 44-45.

<sup>9</sup> Hellman 1861.

<sup>10</sup> Selander & Selander 1927: s. 15.

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### B3. Wilhelmine Schröder

1872 Oscar II received a woman Wilhelmine Schröder in an audience, where she complained of despite being a mistress not being mentioned in Charles will. Since absolutely no one had heard of this relationship me thinks it was a con. Something akin to Helga de la Brache. Oscar chose to buy her silence though. Wilhelmina received an allowance of 300 per year & the same from Charles daughter Louise, now crown princess of Denmark and concerned about her fathers reputation. Wilhelmine also got to live for free in the remade office of Ulriksdal's theatre.

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In 1918, at the age of 79, Schröder wrote an account of hers & Charles's relationship - now in the Bernadotte Archives. Since nothing in the narrative was documented, all the people were dead and the context unclear, you had to take her at faith: She was the daughter of a Danish landowner who had moved to Sweden. In the summer of 1860, she had sought out Charles at his summer castle Bäckaskog to get help in a case the family brought against a major Mühlensfels who in the early 1840s tried to instigate a murder of her father. In 1865, she again sought him out, this time for not being allowed to attend a telegraphy course. In 1866 they met yet again regarding the telegraphy course, and then they became a couple. Master of the Royal Stables Rudolf Tornérhjelm (1814-1885) was supposed to have been involved and from 1866 also the peasant MP Per Nilsson in Espö (1816-1879). 1866-1869, she had been postmaster in Hällestad and then moved to Stockholm where Charles installed her in an apartment on Drottninggatan 72. After Charles's death Wilhelmina turned to journalism and wrote in *Tidskrift för Hemmet*. She was a spiritualist and 1902 got her collected stories published in a 1000-page volume.<sup>11</sup>

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### C. POSTHUMOUS RUMOURS

In 2016 Charles had a reputation for, in the manner of “droit de seigneur”, having left a cuckoo in every place he visited. There is even supposed to have been an association of descendants. He is synonymous with an entire epoch 1850-1870, known as “The King's Happy Days“, interpreted in this spirit. With modern archives, internet & DNA tests, many people have followed up rumours about having him in the family, so far without results.<sup>12</sup> The two children reported in <wikipedia> are highly uncertain. Carl Johan Bolander (born 1854-02-04) is the son of Anders Magnus Petersson Bolander & Anna Greta Petersdotter Lindqvist. Ellen Maria Svensson (born 1865-10-28) is the daughter of Carl Peter Svensson & Vilhelmina Styrell (Hanna's half sister).

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<sup>11</sup> Schröder 1918; Thermaenius 1943; Eriksson 1954: ss. 371-381; Wennerholm 1982: s. 23; Dagens Nyheter, 1974-02-25, s. 14; Schander 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Rötter 2000; Charlesson 2009; Hedin 2010; Svensson 2010.

In 1924, historian Carl Hallendorff published a biography of Charles XV, in which his real or imagined womanizing is taken for granted. Hallendorff does not mention names or sources, but describes them as follows:

Were they really hidden? There is an oral tradition and at times even records of the kind which are not fit to print. Most is anecdotes resembling a host of others. Some everyday, some exaggerated. But however many you discard, there is a residue, which in some probability originates from Charles' most intimate circle or from himself. That such rumours exist is bad for the throne, be they true or not.<sup>13</sup>

Hallendorff was very annoyed about Bååth-Holmberg's biography about Charles which he found both tendentious and incorrect, but difficult to criticize because she did not disclose her sources.<sup>14</sup> Regarding Charles's love for Sigrid Sparre, Bååth-Holmberg wove a whole story which she concluded with Charles' deathbed confession to Sparre's brother: "Your sister has been my only love - if she had become mine, I would have become another man." B-H filled in: "By being deprived of true love, Charles XV was also deprived of the moral fibre it entails"<sup>15</sup> Which, according to Hallendorff, gave Charles an undeserved status of martyr. Maybe so. The truth seems hidden in the poetry:

*To Sigrid Sparre (1848)*  
In you I see an earthly angel  
White and pure, a lily on a stem  
With sunny hair and sky blue eyes.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hallendorff 1924: s. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Hallendorff 1924: s. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Bååth-Holmberg 1891: s. 586.

<sup>16</sup> Ulfsäter-Troell 1996: s. 167.

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