

Sunnyside, March 28, 1853

My dear Sarah;

A letter received from you while I was at Washington gave an account of the marriage procession of Louis Napoleon and his bride to the church of Notre Dame which you saw from a window near the Hotel de Ville. One of your recent letters, I am told speaks of your having been presented to the Empress ~~Empress~~. I shall ^{see} it when I go to town, Louis Napoleon and ~~E~~ Eugenie Montijo, Emperor and Empress of France! One of whom I have had a guest at my cottage on the Hudson, the other ^{shown} When a child I have had on my knee at Granada! It seems to cap the climax of the strange dramas of which Paris has been the theatre during my life time.

I have repeatedly thought that each grand "coup de Theatre" would be the last that would occur in my life time - but each has been succeeded by another equally striking - and what will be the next - who can conjecture.

~~The last I saw of Eugenie Montijo~~

The last I saw of Eugenie Montijo she was one of the reigning belles of Madrid and she and her giddy circle had swept away my charming young friend the beautiful and accomplished Levcadia Zanne, ^{even} into their career of fashionable dissipation. Now Eugenie is upon a throne and ~~Eugenie~~ Levcadia

a voluntary recluse in a convent of one of the most ^{rigorous} severe orders. Poor Levcadia! - perhaps however hers may ultimately be the happiest of the two, "The storm" with her "is o'er" and she at rest." But the other is launched from a returnless shore on a dangerous sea unfamilar to its tremendous ships -

My dear Sir:

A letter received from you while I was at Washington gave me account of the marriage procession of Louis Napoleon and his bride to the church of Notre Dame which you saw from a window near the Hotel de Ville. One of your recent letters I am told speaks of your having been present at the marriage.

I shall be glad to hear from you, Louis Napoleon and Eugenie Montijo, Emperor and Empress of France, one of whom I have had a guest at my cottage on the island, the other when a child I have had on my knee at Greenwich. It seems to me the climax of the strange drama of which Paris has been the theatre during my life time.

I have repeatedly thought that such grand "coup de Theatre" would be the last that would occur in my life time but each has been succeeded by another equally striking and what will be the next - who can conjecture. The last I saw of Eugenie Montijo she was one of the

reigning belles of Madrid and she and her giddy circle had swept away my charming young friend the beautiful and accomplished Leontine Larn, into the career of dissipation. Now Eugenie is upon a throne and Leontine is

a voluntary recluse in a convent of one of the most illustrious orders for females! - "The Storm" with her "is a" to be the happiest of the two. "But the other is launched from and this at least." But the other is launched from a volcano and is a dangerous one. -

wrecks. Am I to live to see the catastrophe of her career and the end of their suddenly conjured up empire, which seems to be of such stuff "as dreams are made of". I confess my personal acquaintance with the individuals who figure in this historical romance gives me uncommon interest in it, but I consider it stamped with danger and instability, and as liable to extravagant vicissitudes as one of our novels. You do not need to witness the grand features of this passing pageant. You are probably reading one of the most peculiar and eventful pages of history, and may ere long look back upon it as a romantic tale.

I have passed part of the winter at Washington delightfully situated in the house of my friend Kennedy, who was Secretary of the Navy. I do not know whether you were ever acquainted with him and his wife; he is a genial fellow full of talent and of a most happy humor; she one of the most lovable little women in the world. Their house was a very gay one but the company which frequented it choice. I found the dissipation of Washington, however, at times almost too much for me. I was anxious to prosecute some research among the archives of the State department; but found myself continually carried off my legs by a tide of engagements of all kinds. Washington is the great gathering place of talent and beauty from all parts of the Union as well as from abroad. The cordial attentions I met on all sides were certainly deeply gratifying, but occasionally were overpowering and I now and then felt myself casting back a longing eye to the quiet of little Sunnyside -

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that I cannot but share with danger and in stability and
as history is a human record of human events
the story of human life is the story of the human
condition. The one feature of the story
is the story of the human condition, and the story of the
human condition is the story of the human life.

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little human life.

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I was present at the going out of one administration and the coming in of another; was acquainted with both presidents and most of the members of both cabinets and witnessed the inauguration of General Pierce. It was admirable to see the quiet and courtesy with which this great transition of power and rule took place. I was at festive meetings where the members of the opposite parties mingled socially together and have seen the two presidents arm in arm as if the sway of an (eminent?) empire was not passing from one to the other. I was much

pleased with what I saw of the new president. His appearance and manner were quiet and gentlemanlike; and I was gratified by the determination which he expressed to me in private of taking care of Hawthorne the author, who had been his early friend and fellow student. Hawthorne has accordingly received the appointment of Consul at Liverpool, - a lucrative post. I believe you have read Hawthorne's admirable novels and essays - some of the best productions in our literature.

The letters of your brother and Nancy of course keep you acquainted with the main topics of family news. The death of poor Jane, which leaves Theodore a widower with five young children. The latter are at present at their grandmother's at Geneva. Theodore will break up housekeeping. I have invited him to come up here for the present.

Mr. Grinnell has in a great measure recovered from his very serious malady: still it will take time for him to regain his mental strength and activity - His head is easily fatigued by the bustle of business and he has to avoid the city and all perplexing cares. He and Julia are about to set out on a weeks visit to Charlotte at Cayuga lake and I have prevailed upon Sarah to accompany them. I think it probable that this illness will make a complete change in Mr. Grinnell's mode of life; that he will give up many of the varied engagements and occupations of a public nature with which he was crowded; that he will ease off in

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I was present at the going out of our administration and the
 leaving of Mr. Allen, who accompanied with Mr. President and
 part of the members of both cabinets and witnessed the inauguration
 of James Garfield. It was administered over the great hall
 crowded with about six great numbers of people and with a large
 force of police. I was at the meetings where the members of the
 opposite parties hurriedly together and have seen
 the two presidents come in arm in arm as if the result of our
 (some would say) surprising triumph in the election. I was
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 that he will give up many of the varied engagements and occupations of
 a public nature with which he was crowded; that he will ease off in

business as much as possible and pass the chief part of his time in the country, in which he takes great delight and finds abundance of healthful occupation.

At the last of this week I expect some of the family up here to birthday the 9th of April when I come of age-- of full age--70 years!

I never could have hoped at such an advanced period of life to be in such full health, such activity of mind and body and such capacity for enjoyment as I find myself at present. But I have reached the allotted limit of existence -- all beyond is special indulgence. So long as I can retain my present health and spirits I am happy to live, for I think my life is important to the happiness of others--but as soon as my life becomes useless to others and joyless to myself I hope I may be relieved from the burthen and I shall lay it down with heartfelt thanks to that almighty power which has guided my incautious steps through so many uncertain and dangerous ways and enabled me to close my career in serenity and peace, surrounded by my family and friends, in the little home I have found for myself, among the scenes of my boyhood.

With affectionate remembrances to Mr. Storow and love to the dear little folks

Your affectionate Uncle

(signed)

WASHINGTON IRVING

original was
 sold to Dr. Rosenbach
 in 1930's?
 by Wentworth Rogers Bacon
 K.B.

