

# **MY YEARS IN PARIS**

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My years in Paris by Pauline Metternich

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**PAULINE METTERNICH**

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IN PARIS**



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BY

PRINCESS PAULINE METTERNICH

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## MY YEARS IN PARIS

### I

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH THE EMPEROR, NAPOLEON  
THE THIRD, AND THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

My husband had been sent to France—to St. Sauveur, where the Emperor was staying—in order to ratify some clause of the Treaty of Zürich, which had been concluded when the war with Italy came to an end. His Majesty, who had known him for a long time, expressed a wish to meet him again at Biarritz, adding, "I shall hope to see the Princess there as well as yourself."

On his return from St. Sauveur my husband wrote and asked me to join him in Paris. I was in Bohemia just then with my little girl, who was only two years old, but I complied with his request and made all the necessary arrangements for the child to remain at Königswart.

We stayed for about a week in Paris at the Hôtel de la Paix, Rue de la Paix, and it was from the windows of that hotel that I witnessed the triumphal entry of the troops

## My Years in Paris

on their return from Italy. This sight inspired me with the profound antipathy I have always felt for the Italians—perhaps it would be more correct to say it increased that antipathy.

I have a horror of people who talk so much, and do so little. The Italians asked the French to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them, and the French most foolishly (and how they must have regretted it later on!) set out with drawn swords to deliver the heroic Italians from "the infamous yoke" of Austria! . . . Thinking people in France were absolutely anti-Italian, while the Faubourg St. Germain frankly detested them—maybe because his Majesty had a certain amount of sympathy with them. The day after the troops entered Paris, the Emperor and Empress left for Biarritz, where they settled down at the Villa Eugénie.

My preparations took but a short time. I provided myself with all the frocks, hats, etc., necessary for the occasion, and after a few days we joined their Majesties at Biarritz, putting up at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, which was supposed to be the best hotel in the place, but which to my mind was atrocious.

My maid was still brushing the dust off my clothes, and I was still smoothing my hair, when we heard a voice in the street outside inquiring whether Princess Metternich had arrived. I looked out of the window and

## First Interview with the Emperor

saw a lady whom I immediately recognised as the Empress Eugénie ; she was accompanied by several other ladies and gentlemen. My husband, recognising her Majesty's voice, ran down to receive her ; they at once entered into conversation, and concealing myself behind a curtain, I examined her at my leisure.

The Empress was of medium height, a trifle too stout for her age, and, judged according to the Austrian standard, her figure was nothing out of the way. And yet the general effect was charming. She was wonderfully graceful. I was not able to distinguish her features very clearly, as she was wearing not only a large hat, but also a veil which partly hid her face. Her Majesty was very simply dressed. She wore a black silk skirt looped up all round, a fashion which she herself had introduced in order to do away with long dresses when staying in the country, and a very sensible fashion too, although the Faubourg St. Germain took the strongest objection to it, and declared that she went about in short skirts like a ballet girl ! With this skirt she wore a perfectly simple red flannel shirt, with a belt round her waist. She held a stick in one hand, and in the other she carried a green parasol. Her conversation with my husband never hung fire for one moment, and I must say what struck me most of all was the extraordinary way