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## PRINCESSE ACHILLE MURAT.

### A Biographical Sketch.

BY MRS. ELLEN CALL LONG.

*(First published in 1867.)*

Cold in death is the heart so long attuned to suffering's call, friendship's genial mingling, and love's devotion. Ail that a prodigal nature gave in a noble, generous and gentle heart, with enchanting face and form, of almost perennial youth and loveliness, is lost to us, and how can we do without her in a world where such are so few?

For more than forty years the subject of this sketch had lived in Florida, having removed to the Territory from the State of Virginia not very long after the "Exchange of Flags," which made it the property of the United States.

Her exquisite beauty, and modest demeanor, combined with readiness of wit and affability of speech, made her at once, as "Widow Grey," queen of a society formed of intelligence and refinement unsurpassed anywhere, when such men as Gov. Wm. P. Duval - (the humorous author of "Ralph Ringwood," which appeared many years since in the "Knickerbocker," a New York periodical) - Judge Thomas Randall, Gen. R. K. Call and Col. Gadsden were in their prime, while of her own sex were Mrs. R. K. Call, Mrs. Florida White, the lovely Mrs. Nutall, and the charming family of Wm. Wirt, ladies all of national reputation for beauty and accomplishment. Few frontier settlements attracted such talent, wealth and family as did the recently bought Province of Florida.

It was not long before the extreme loveliness of person and character of the young widow won the admira-

tion of Prince Achille Murat, the eldest son of the King of Naples and Caroline, sister of the first Napoleon, who, exiled from France and Italy, had not long before selected Florida as his home, perhaps to separate himself as far as possible from crowned heads and sceptres. It required some persuasion from her parents to induce the lovely Kate to consider favorably the suit of the Prince, who, away from fashion's haunts and court etiquette, had grown careless even to slovenliness in his habits and dress - but at no time could he have ever resembled his royal father, in his pride of personal appearance, who was considered the greatest coxcomb of Europe.

Many amusing stories are told of those days of courtship. Mrs. Willis, the mother of Kate, was a thorough housekeeper-her surroundings expressing the most exact neatness and compliance with Heaven's first law - too particularly to the tobacco consumers who soiled her polished floors with ambia's brown stain. The Prince being an inveterate patron of the weed, to obviate the risk of incurring the displeasure of la mere, was always accompanied on his visits by a huge shaggy dog, which he used for the purpose of a spittoon. His oddities of dress and manner assimilated but little with the refined purity of taste of the lady to whom he made suit, but notwithstanding, after only a few months' acquaintance, they were married, by which union Madame Murat became the grand niece of the two greatest men the world ever knew-Napoleon Bonaparte and George Washington, she being a lineal descendant of our renowned patriot.

The newly married couple were soon domiciled at "Lipona" - Prince Murat's plantation in Jefferson county, in the neighborhood of Col. Rob't Gamble, Judge Randal, W. George Noble Jones and Col. Gadsden, whose hospitalities are so widely known as to form a part of the history of Florida.

No couple were more entirely unlike than those of "Lipona" - one of truly feminine instincts, never wander-

ing from woman's sphere or attempting that in which she was unprepared, possessing and practising the wisdom pertaining to daily life, while her refined neatness and taste gave an air of elegance and luxury to all round, over which pervaded a spirit of sentiment spreading harmony and pleasantness wherever she moved; while le Prince was devoted to the acquisition of learning, particularly to the study of the natural sciences, and, when his conversation was directed by a superiorly balanced mind, he was most entertaining, otherwise he was, inclined to be frivolous even to coarseness. His want of personal neatness was most trying to the delicate sensitiveness of his wife, and but for the constant attention of his faithful "William," (his valet,) at times his presence would scarce have been endurable. He boasted of never removing his boots from the first use until worn out, and without some such strategem as practised upon Domine Sampson, he would never have changed his clothing. On one occasion he fell into a boiler of warm syrup, during the season of making sugar; while bystanders feared he might be badly scalded, his only thought was, as he afterwards expressed it, "Kate will make me wash." His dislike to water was such that he never drank it, unless well diluted with brandy. "Water (he said) was only intended for beasts of the field." Col. Murat was a man of singular resource. On an occasion of guests arriving unexpectedly, and finding his larder rather empty, while, to increase the difficulty, Madame was from home, he ordered all the ears and tails cut from his hogs, of which he made a most savory dish, while their swineships still roamed at large. He thought it a pity hogs could not be all heads and tails. He boasted of having tried all the birds and most of the reptiles of Florida. He said, "Alligator tail soup would do, but the buzzard was not good." He was extremely fond of experiments in cookery, often annoying and puzzling Madame Murat and the cook by the strange

mingling of sauces and condiments which he furtively introduced into food for the table. There was no tree or shrub that he would not suggest to some use - many as vegetables - while the magnolia, myrtles and all other glossy leafed trees of our forests would afford wax, and those of a medicinal virtue were as various as numerous - even discovering the cinchonia, or quinine plant, in one of our beautiful wild flowering shrubs. Well directed energy and capital, united with his cunning knowledge, would have accomplished much in developing the natural resources of our beautiful Florida. On one occasion he persuaded Madame Murat to spend the day with a near neighbor, having much to say upon one's duty to those we are commanded to love as ourselves, promising to call for her in the evening and escort her home. Naturally looking homewards as twilight shades appeared, perhaps watching for his promised coming, she perceived an unusual light. Fearing her dwelling was fired, she hurried thence, accompanied by her friends ; on arriving, Murat was discovered in the yard most industriously at work, heated and smoke-stained, over a huge kettle, under which still flamed the fire which had excited anxiety. He rushed towards her as she approached, exclaiming, "Oh ! Kate, I have made all your clothes a most beautiful pink." Horror of horrors to a woman! He had actually taken all her clothing indiscriminately, under garments, dresses and wrappings, and dyed them all of the same rosy hue, in order to ascertain the virtue of some native wood for dyeing purposes; and for this he had persuaded his wife to absent herself from home. However trying his eccentricities made him to the "Kate" he adored, she was a most excellent and devoted wife - virtues well tested through long years of helplessness and disease on his part.

A sojourn in Brussels of near two years was an agreeable episode in the life of the Murats. There the Prince was given command of a regiment, and there he had

the pleasure of seeing his lovely Kate occupy the position she was so fitted to adorn, who proved herself to the "manor born," and in no respect inferior to the renowned Pauline and Caroline in grace and beauty, as well as queenly deportment. The Argus eyes of kings soon found cause to fear that Col. Murat was making his regiment a nucleus to raise troops to restore his family to France and Naples ; and it is not improbable, from his proximity to those countries, that he was at least feeling their pulse. He was frequently stopped in public by old soldiers and subjects of his uncle and father, who knelt to him, covering his hands with kisses. His resemblance to Bonaparte was so great as to awaken the enthusiasm of his old soldiers and such demonstration of feeling as to make the suspicion plausible concerning his motives. His regiment was consequently disbanded by order of the King of Belgium. In taking leave of his command, Col. Murat expressed himself in seven different languages, displaying his polyglot acquirements as well as the national variety of their character. The exiles were yet forbidden France and Italy; they therefore turned to England, making London their headquarters, where they spent a year of delightful social intercourse, their house being the resort of all the exiled family. Here were frequently Hortense and the present Emperor of France, who, in his hour of triumph, remembered the affectionate sympathy of kind "Cousin Kate" in his days of poverty and obscurity. Here also all distinguished Americans then in England came freely, among whom was most noted Washington Irving. Doubtless much disappointed that his sojourn in Europe had not developed a hope of the restoration of the Bonapartes, the destined day not having yet come, Col. Murat returned to Florida, where he spent the remainder of his life, attending his plantation with which he was not successful, being too experimental and visionary for anything so practical. He took an active part in the Florida Indian War, as Aide-de-Camp to Gen. R. K.

Call, accompanying many an expedition in search of those marauders. An anecdote is told of him, illustrating his want of prejudice in matters gastronomic. The command had been on the march for two days without rations, in the wild everglades of the Indian country. On the evening of the second day, they encountered a band of the enemy and killed a number. Hungry and wearied, they threw themselves down to rest, when a drove of hogs, attracted by the bloody corpses of the Indians, came up and commenced feasting, and in turn attracted the attention of the hungry army. They were soon slain and frying, sending forth a most appetizing smell to the half starved men. Col. Murat, provided with a fat chop, was enjoying it with such gusto as to call forth a look of disgust from his commander, who was particularly delicate in his diet. Col. Murat replied to the insinuation, "I know why you no eat de pork, because he eat Indian, but I just soon eat Indian if he well fried."

Col. Murat expressed himself for many years as an Atheist. While a student at the University, he was first troubled concerning the existence of a Supreme Being. He confessed so much. to his Priest, who gave him the required number of Aves and Paters to remove his want of faith; he confessed he went religiously through the course, but without benefit. They were doubled, but the result was as unsatisfactory. He was perhaps more sincere in his want of belief than most who so express themselves, as tested on the occasion of fighting a duel. The parties had taken their position on the ground, when he beckoned his second (Gen. R. K. Call,) to his side, and said to him, "I may be dead in the next moment, but I now declare to you, I am an entire disbeliever of a future state." Age and disease, however, brought a very different, turn of thought and feeling, and for several months previous to his death, he found his greatest comfort in the prayers and conversation of a Catholic Priest,

who was his constant companion and who it is said endeavored to persuade him, that having no children, it was his duty to leave his entire estate to the Catholic Church. But no religious fervor could make him forget his faithful wife, who had tended him so carefully, and borne with so much patience his infirmities.

I have wandered too long from the subject of this sketch, but the identity of the husband and wife for more than twenty years makes a notice of one inseparable from the other, while the anecdotes of Achille serve to illustrate the contrast of the born and educated Prince with the gentle and refined Virginia girl. Only two years after the death of Col. Murat, the Bonapartes were restored to their former prestige, the nephew showing himself in all respects worthy of his uncle. The day for which Achille had so long watched came too late for him, but on the assembling of the family at Paris, Kate was there and received with appropriate honor by the Emperor, who recognized her as "Princess of France," bestowing upon her at the same time 125,000 francs, with the privilege of using the royal livery, which she ever afterwards did, even in her country home. Louis Napoleon did not forget the despondent days of London spent with his beautiful cousin, but thus fulfilled the promise faithfully, then made more jestingly than otherwise. She was invited to dine with the Emperor, and although unusually for an American accustomed to the etiquette of Courts, she describes her agitation as extreme, when handed by the Chamberlain to an elevated seat in the Drawing Room of the Palace-but more so when the approach of his majesty was announced by the increasing murmur of "L'Empereur, L'Empereur," until his entrance and rapid advance towards herself, giving her a most cordial, a relation-like reception. Dinner was announced, to which he escorted her. Eugenie was represented indisposed. The long tedious court dinner through, he invited her to the reception room of the



Empress, who she was surprised to find perfectly well, and who had only absented herself that the Emperor might compliment his kindly remembered cousin with the place etiquette required the Empress to occupy if present. Here all restraint was put aside, and they chatted and laughed of the old times with all the ease and nonchalance of a pleasant family greeting. The Emperor kindly invited her to remain in France, offering her a home and support, but she remembered her duty as mistress to the two hundred slaves bequeathed her by her devoted husband, and she recognized, as all southern men and women did, this as no sinecure, but an office imposing upon one a most religious and serious care, and one by her most faithfully performed. The embarrassment of debt had obliged her husband to mortgage most of his negroes to raise money to support them. She determined to return home and use the munificent gift of the Emperor to release the mortgage, and make her slaves more comfortable than she had been able to do for some time.

Several years of uninterrupted happiness followed - years of genial and elegant hospitality, making her residence of "Belle Vue," near Tallahassee, most attractive to the refined in taste and cultivated in mind. The stranger, there led by curiosity to see la princesse, remained fascinated by the sweet simplicity and gentle kindness of the beautiful American. Ever mindful of the pleasure of others, with an experienced knowledge of *savoir vivre*, she had a most happy tact in the time and manner of bringing parties together. Long will be remembered her *recherche dejeuner*s, *fetes champetre* and *petite soupers* of Belle Vue. It was not merely the votaries of fashion, the gay and young, that found welcome here; the poorest, the most miserable, the persecuted turned there instinctively to find relief and the heart sympathy so dear in the hour of trial and affliction. It was her frequent expression, "I am always for the dog that is down." She upheld any cause she espoused most earnestly and indepen-

dently. Though always prominent in all public charities, she was singular in her delicate and modest attention to the poor and obscure - so quietly and gently bestowed as only to be known by her most intimate friends. About this period she was "Vice Regent of the Mount Vernon Association" for Florida, and by her great energy succeeded in raising in the State nearly three thousand dollars for the purchase of the home of her distinguished ancestor. Then came that terrible struggle from Northern fanaticism, which developed all that was good and noble in Southern men and women - every day, every hour, demanding relief for the sick, wounded and afflicted of our poor and suffering people. A native Virginian, Madame Murat was taught patriotism in the political school of Washington, Jefferson and Randolph, and none felt more keenly that devotion to her country that we all remember to have glowed in our hearts so warmly than herself. She was present in the Convention of the passing of the "Ordinance" that separated Florida from the Union, and such was her emotion that she gave way to tears and audible sobs. But there was no faltering, no looking back; from thenceforward she was most active in assisting and encouraging our soldiers. A prominent and generous member of all "Soldiers' Aid Societies" - often sewing whole days to assist in clothing troops - and a munificent donator of Hospitals, while hundreds of weary feet were covered during the war with socks of her own knitting. She would sometimes prepare a breakfast or dinner for all the convalescent of our Hospital and send her own carriage for them. How delicate the thought to remember them at this crisis, when recovery so often depends upon tempting and nourishing food.

She took an individual interest in every soldier--"our noble men," as she ever spoke of them, while every battle struggle aroused within her the most mother-like anxiety and pride, and no failure, no defeat, could persuade her

to believe that the South could ever be overcome ; and so severe was the blow, when all was over, that her decline in health may be dated from that hour.

The sudden emancipation of our slaves was cruel. The young and able negroes were capable of supporting themselves, but thousands of the old and infirm were cast upon the world to starve. To Madame Murat's tender heart this was most trying. Left without a dollar, she had no means of assisting her recent slaves, who could not understand but that they were still bound to her and she to them. She gave them the privilege of cultivating the "Old Plantation," where they barely lived, while she herself found means supplied by the sale of valuable jewels. Her affectionate nature was greatly moved on the Christmas following emancipation by the generosity of her former slaves, who presented her with a barrel of flour, syrup, chickens, eggs, etc., etc., as a general contribution from the plantation. With tearful eyes and swelling heart, she thanked them for their kindness, and declining their offering, so delicately as not to wound their feelings, added from her own store to their's, bidding them make glad the season as had been their habit heretofore.

It was early in 1866, I met her much agitated; handing me a most official looking document she said, "Read this. Ten minutes ago I did not know that I possessed a dollar in the world." I found the document to be a letter from Louis Napoleon's Private Secretary, informing her that his Majesty had settled upon her an annuity of 50,000 francs. It was a moment of exquisite pleasure to us both, and most pleasantly we mingled our tears. In broken speech she said : "God bless Louis - and I will write him that I feel that God will bless him, for his gift shall relieve many a poor widow and orphan's need."

It was while engaged in the merciful work of preparing an entertainment to raise funds to aid in the defence of Major John Gee, who was imprisoned and perse-

cuted for supposed cruelty to Federal soldiers during the war, that death first gave her warning. A room for a concert was to be prepared, which room, having been used on a recent festival occasion, the withered wreaths for its decoration still hung in festoons from its ceiling. On entering, Madame Murat remarked in a subdued tone, "Withered flowers, how dreadful the odor of dead flowers." Her speech became confused, and for a day or two she was partially unconscious - having been at that moment slightly touched with paralysis. Rallying, a trip to Europe was recommended, where she was again welcomed by her husband's family as one of them. It was with infinite interest that she gave the Emperor an account of the sufferings of the South, and the shameful humiliation since bestowed upon a brave and honorable people.

Home again, where her friends rejoiced to meet her in her wonted health' and spirits, but only a few months more of the old genial kindness and benevolence, when she was attacked with typhoid fever, which for six months made her a most hopeless invalid, and to whose ravages she at last succumbed, on the morning of the 6th of August, at her residence on the "Lipona Plantation," the home of her married life-and all that was left of the beautiful and lovely woman was placed beside the remains of her husband in the Episcopal Cemetery of Tallahassee.

Madame Murat was a singular instance of one living near the prescribed age of three score and ten without being old. Age was never associated with her. Of uninterrupted health, until the last year of her life, she was remarkably preserved in beauty of person and youthfulness of feeling. Devoted to the endeavor of pleasing, she had in no degree relaxed interest in all charitable works or festive enjoyment, which made her the chosen companion of all ages and stations, acting a part of more than common importance in a society of which she was

the greatest ornament, and the poor's best friend, owing to the peerlessly beautiful impulses of a high-toned nature.

A distinguished French author pronounces it a condition of glory to die at the right time ; and though to lose her now, in the maturity of her attractiveness and usefulness, is as if she had left us in life's noonday; yet we know that she had fulfilled her destiny, and that a longer life must have bowed her in days of feebleness and infirmities, and obscured those qualities so long valued, but which now remain as a bright vision of all that is good in woman.

She is no more - but long will her gentle and pure spirit dwell among us, and from her mortal life we will twine wreaths of sweet remembrance of all her virtues, and from the garden of her usefulness and pleasantness we would build pyramids of praise to last all time, of the loveliness of mind and heart of one who in a long life never gave cause for tears.

Such was our Princesse of France, Catherine D. Murat.

