

PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT

A Fallen Queen.

EMPERESS EUGENIE'S VISIT TO EGYPT.

Empress Eugenie, now an aged lady whose hair is white with years and sorrow, after an interval of 35 years, left in February a French port on a trip to Egypt. She travelled incognito. In recording the fact, the London "Daily Telegraph" calls attention to the altered circumstances in which the ex-Empress of the French set out on her second trip to Egypt, the first having been undertaken in the closing months of the year 1869. What a changed world it is to-day for this fallen Queen, and what memories must rise up before her eyes as she thinks of then and now. The contrast is so dramatic and so poignant that we may venture to recall events which may have slipped from the memory even of those who are old enough to recall their impressions of the year 1869.

On November 17, 1869, the Suez Canal was opened with all the pomp and circumstance which Ismail Pasha, the most recklessly lavish of all modern rulers, could devise. And the Empress of the French, the Empress Eugenie, was the most august personage in all that brilliant throng which assembled on the banks of the Nile. Yet the Emperor of Austria was there in person, and the Crown Prince of Prussia afterwards the ill-fated Frederick the Noble—and the Prince of Holland. But these passed almost unconsidered compared with the presence of the Empress of the French, the Consort of Napoleon III., then the arbiter—or believed to be the arbiter—of the destinies of Europe. Sedan lay in the future less than a year ahead—but who could foresee that? Only a few sharp, eagle eyes at Berlin, who knew how destiny was shaping itself, for they were helping her in her task.

The Emperor of the French was the great figure in Europe in the autumn of 1869, when the Empress embarked for the Orient, travelling slowly in the Imperial yacht l'Aigle, and calling at Venice and Constantinople on the way. It was highly appropriate for yet another reason that the Empress Eugenie should be the guest of honour in the land of the Pharaohs. For the canal was a French undertaking; the engineer was a Frenchman and the idol of France; and Napoleon III. had proclaimed his faith in M. de Lesseps from start to finish, and had helped his project by every means in his power. The ambitious visionary was right where the practical English engineer Stephenson and the level-headed Palmerston were wildly wrong. What Palmerston had denounced as "a bubble scheme" became a reality, and instead of English speculators, as he confidently foretold, becoming lost money, the British Exchequer has continued reason to bless Disraeli's shrewdness in purchasing Ismail's shares. It was but right, therefore, that the Empress of the French should be the central personage during that amazing week when Ismail's borrowed money was poured out like water in mad profusion.

The Empress was then in early middle age, with beauty scarcely touched by time, a queenly figure, possessed of every grace and charm. She was the mistress of the fetes of Compiègne of which all Europe was talking; she was the friend of Queen Victoria and of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria; of both she had been the hostess during their stay in France, while at the Paris Exhibition of 1867 she had received the Emperors of Austria and Russia, the King of Prussia and the Prince of Wales. In 1869 the Empress Eugenie was the most brilliant lady in Europe, whose slightest wish was law. At Constantinople the Sultan himself embarked on shipboard to greet her in the Bosphorus, and conducted her to his palace of Beyler Bay; at Port Said it was the French Imperial yacht

that all eyes strained to see. There were rumours at the last moment that she was not coming, that the Emperor had taken offence at something, that some hitch had occurred. From first to last people's thoughts were of Napoleon and Eugenie. Poor Ismail, who hoped to show the world that a new power had been born in Egypt, had built a palace for her coming on the shores of Lake Timsah—a real Aladdin's Palace, where for three days open tables were kept for 10,000 people, feasted with the best and rarest that luxury could supply, and surrounded by a great city of tents, where the Khedive's guests were housed. Someone told him that the Empress was sure to desire to visit the Pyramids—at once he ordered a broad road to be made, seven miles

long, to be finished in six weeks. And finished it was by the labour 10,000 fellahs working under the heavy lash. The Empress of the French must be able to travel smoothly!

The Empress came and saw and conquered anew, though her conquest was already secure. Her yacht arrived last, just in time—a studied effect, no doubt—and sailed slowly down the canal from Port Said, greeted with salvos of cannon. The procession of yachts was too slow to be very impressive, and the real triumph of the Empress took place in a scene more suited to her sex and to her charms—in the ballroom of the palace, where the State ball was held to celebrate the opening of the new route between East and West. Her Majesty was the Queen of the ball—she and

France triumphed. With her own hands she decorated M. de Lesseps in the name of the Emperor with the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour. "I can see her still in my mind's eye," Mr Edward Dicey has written in a recent book, "as covered with diamonds, she moved like a goddess amidst the crowds who stood up to give her passage to the dais, on which, surrounded by crowned heads and the heirs to Royal thrones, she took her seat as, if I may use the phrase, the patroness of the ball. I can still hear the strains of l'artant pour la Syrie, which the bands played in her honour as she embarked on the Imperial yacht, or leaving the ball, and the salutes by which her departure was proclaimed." It was her culminating triumph—thereafter all was bitterness



A ROYAL VISITOR.

His Majesty King George Tubou II, of Tonga, and his late consort. King George came up to Auckland last week from his Island Kingdom in connection with the recent trouble, which resulted in Mr. im Thurn, Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner of the Western Pacific, deposing Sateki, the Premier and his son, Fobu, the treasurer, from Tonga to Fiji. Mr. T. Cotter, of Auckland, legal adviser to His Majesty the King of Tonga has drawn up a lengthy protest against Mr. im Thurn's action, which will be submitted to King Edward VII. and his ministers. King George is a big man, 6ft. 7in. in height, and weighs over 20 stone. He is not yet 31 years of age.