

# IS AN AMERICAN GIRL TO BECOME A PRINCESS ROYAL AND LATER QUEEN OF ITALY?

By WILLIAM J. D. CROKE...

ROME, June 1.—The kingdom of Serbia was thrown into a hubbub not many months ago by the matrimonial determination of its youthful sovereign, King Alexander. The Cabinet resigned in a body, and the poor young King was busted in the throes of a reconstruction of his government when he should have been receiving the congratulations of his subjects. He was embroiled in a conflict with the members of his family, with many of his friends, with a too large portion of his people and with the worldly wise everywhere.

The Austrian empire had but a little before seen the Archduchess Stephanie renounce royal and imperial rank to find happiness at last in the true love of Count Lónyay, and somewhat later it saw the heir presumptive to the throne of the Hapsburgs, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, marry for love at the risk of his throne and at the cost of actual succession to the scepter of an ordinary nobleman. And in connection with these strange happenings it is to be noted that the matrimonial charms seem to be shown as the strong-



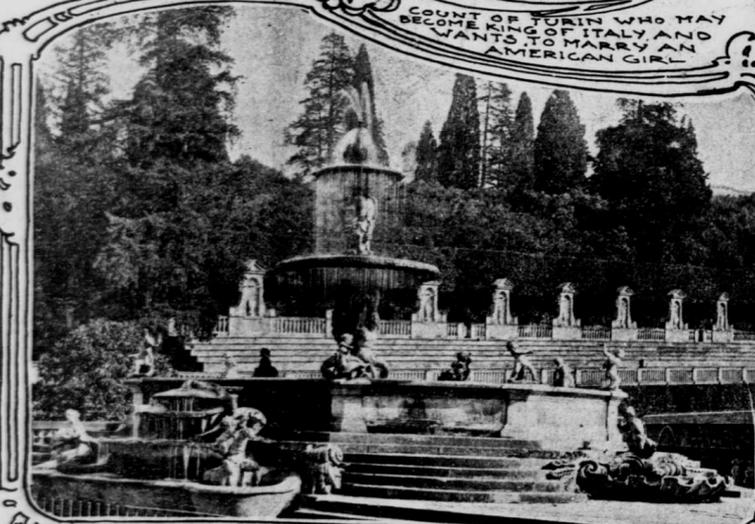
COUNT OF TURIN WHO MAY BECOME KING OF ITALY AND WANTS TO MARRY AN AMERICAN GIRL



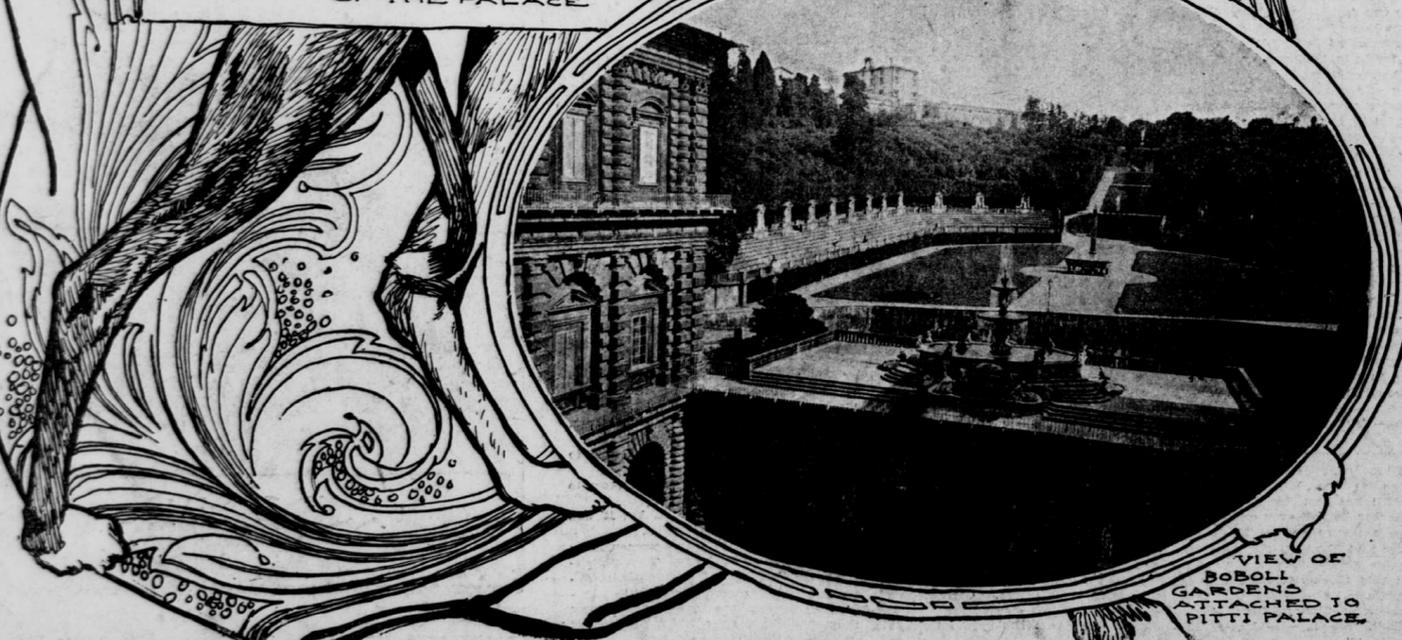
PRESENT QUEEN OF ITALY WHO MAY BE SUCCEEDED BY AN AMERICAN GIRL



BALL ROOM IN PITTI PALACE



FOUNTAIN IN GARDENS OF THE PALACE



VIEW OF BOBOLI GARDENS ATTACHED TO PITTI PALACE

est, for they have exacted the greatest price and risk. Thus it would appear that time writes no wrinkles, but simply rivets chains.

All this, except any exaggerated maturity of charms, has very much to do with the past and present of a story (the substantial truth of which can be amply guaranteed) that I am going to tell about a young lady, for if a further delay ensue it may only strengthen the possibilities of a still more singular union during the twentieth century.

Long before the period when the interests of hymen were being declared paramount over those of royalty and nationality among these different races and in these different countries it was already whispered in Italy that a Prince of the blood had lost his heart to a lady whom, though she was commendable in every

way, was his cousin, well nigh mortally wounded, and returned to Italy a hero with the monarchists, if not with all the nation, with all who fight—the new Italy is largely a nation of duellists—and, most of all and better still, with those for whom men fight.

He is young, at least for one who harbors an old love riveted to be of the undying kind which time only inflames in its passing, for he was born on November 24, 1870. Like his elder brother, the Duke of Aosta, and his younger brother, the Duke of Abruzzi, he is of manly bearing and pleasing appearance. An ideal lover in all respects is Vittorio Emanuele di Savoia ed Aosta, Count of Turin.

When the romance began to be suspected, toward the end of the reign of King Humbert, the heir to the Italian throne was married, but without offspring. Of the three nephews of that ill-fated sovereign only one, the Duke of Aosta, was married. He was born in 1869, but had been married several years. The Duke of Abruzzi was born in 1873, and his not being married could then, as now, be accounted for by his youth and by his all-absorbing love of the sea, adventure and travel. His expedition in search of the north pole affords a reason which all will understand.

Why, then, is the second brother still unmarried and unmentioned by serious rumor, as far as princely matchmaking and marriage are concerned? As I am writing another idle rumor has risen, only to be exploded. The explanation is to be found in the fact related, that I will not say now and here, though I know, whether it was in San Francisco or in New York—a few years ago he lost his heart to one of those American beauties who have come, one by one, to do every kind of European coronet, and who, were it only by a special law of evolution and an inevitable law of nature, must be destined at last to wear crowns.

This is a dear American girl, who is known as the daughter of a soldier of distinction; who must, alas! be described here, not inappropriately, however, under the letters, "Miss R. of F.—" and being the daughter of an American hero only too good for any prince who were worthy of her, even though he were a hero in fact as well as by noblesse oblige, and of his place in a family of sovereign princes who have been creating kingdoms with their good broadsword for eight centuries.

way, he could not easily and conveniently marry. His heart had gone in the way wherein the hearts of all these royal and imperial persons had gone; would he have the courage to be led by it? Would his feelings draw him to the uttermost conclusion? Over all obstacles? It has not yet been decided that he will, though he does not lack courage, for he is the valorous Count of Turin. But his ideal is not any Madame de Maintenon, of classic age and compelling winsomeness withal, though he has loved her for long—I am telling the story as it is whispered—but one of those refreshing and inspiring types of young women such as will be found strikingly depicted by Mrs. Humphry Ward in "Eleanor."

The story is that the Prince fell under the sway of this lady love some time ago; that the passing of months has matured the charm then cast over him, perhaps to the magic point of invincibility, and that what was simply nature at the first has proved to be doubly such by custom.

But the lady is a commoner, merely of civil condition, so the Prince is one of the most romantic lovers of our own or any other age and place. Unhappy in the bliss of his royalty and greatness, in the ideal grandeur of his residence at the Pitti Palace and the surrounding gardens of Boboli, even as the blessed Damozel, who—

Leaned out From the gold bar of heaven: Who, unsatisfied and forever loving without requital and hoping without sure hope, pined away in the very courts of heaven and, desperate amid consummate bliss—

Cast her arms along And laid her face between her hands and wept.

But the Prince's manhood is of stern stuff, obviously as unlike as possible to the soft womanhood of the figure in the poem of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and in the painting of Burne Jones, but adamant even in comparison with the virility of the lover for whom St. Damozel yearned in paradise. He is a duelist, and this we may only inappropriately fancy the blessed Damozel's lover to have been, not merely a brilliant swordsman but effectively a duelist; and, as it chances in a history-making way, one who has added a modern chapter to the story of the sfida, or combat, between Italian and French heroes at Barletta, which Massimo d'Azeglio has made popular and, maybe, immortal in his romance.

When, after the rout of Adowa, Prince Henry of Orleans had told in the Paris newspaper to which he was acting as special foreign correspondent some stories which reflected rather unkindly on the valor, or better, on the Spartan endurance of the Italian prisoners detained at the court of the Abyssinian Negus Negesti, a tide of indignation quickly rose and seethed throughout all Italy and challenges infinite were sent across the border to the brave nation. It was all we must confess, an unspeakably foolish affair, but that is not our concern here. Either the discernment of the friends of the Italian monarchy or merely the impetuous patriotism of the young Prince seized the occasion and turned it to golden advantage. His swordsmanship did the rest. He was in France before it had been bruited that he had challenged the asperser of the fallen warriors of Italy. He was on the appointed field at sunrise before his whereabouts in France had become known. He left Prince Henry, who,

What will he do now? It is not even dreamed still less imagined, that he has obtained the new King's consent. It is not likely that he is possessed of enormous private wealth, nor that, in the case of a transgression of etiquette, he would be able to retain his allowance on the civil list, which is in the King's keeping. But no true lover ever stopped very long to consider such material difficulties, and if some rumors current in circles diplomatic and aristocratic were to come true a new fairy tale may be acted out sooner or later in the twentieth century.

One definite and circumstantial hope he has. The conflict between the Supreme Pontiff and the Italian state sets almost invincible difficulties in the way of suitable marriages for Italian royalists. They must not wed non-Catholics, as this would alienate the favor of a large religious population and imperil many parts of their common interest. It is difficult to induce Protestant royal princesses to change their religion, and the princesses of royal rank belonging to the orthodox religion are not many. The royal princesses of the British empire have contracted marriages with members of the nobility. Might there not be a similar abandonment of traditional usages in the case of an Italian royalty? But, on the other hand, a younger King, and one not an uncle, but a cousin and a brother, fratello-cuzino as Italian speech has it, fills the throne, and Victor Emmanuel III, who is the head of the house of Savoy as well as of the Italian state, though he is rigid and logical, or, better perhaps, because he is such, may be more open to reason than King Humbert.

There is some further hopefulness in the fact that the sovereign is not only young but himself the partner in marriage with a Montenegrin Princess, who entered the royal fold in order to become his wife, and that the love match thus effected is popular with the Italians as such. So young a King, happy in a strange and romantic union, may not be inflexible. So the Prince may take heart of grace. And as he is near of kin an American beauty may become Queen of Italy some day within the space of a generation.