

Strange Legend of Vienna Vaults

Will Return to France of The Aiglon's Bones Lead to Discovery of Hapsburg Treasure?

LAUSANNE, Switzerland.—A strange story comes from Vienna.

I can go to Vienna for dinner and back to Lausanne for breakfast. You understand?

The story is not made for exportation. Call it pure Viennese. Evidently the return to Paris of the Aiglon would give pleasure to the French, who have long desired Napoleon's son to rest beside his mighty father, under the dome of the Invalides. But this rumor is quite other. It does not care a hang for the desires of the French. For a century the body was reposed beside that of Marie Louise, his mother, in the mysterious and unexplored vaults of the Kapuziner Church of Vienna—and there has always been a superstitious unwillingness to budge it.

When Napoleon III arrived in power one of his first acts was to begin negotiations for the "return" of the body—because the boy was born in Paris and forcibly taken from Paris by the allied Kings.

In 1855 the cession was almost agreed upon. In 1857 there was a hitch. The final failure of the project was variously ascribed as cause or effect of the war with Austria in 1859, and later to general hostility; but there would seem to have always been a hidden motive—and this story gives an idea of it.

Black and gruesome legend to touch so pretty a baby, so unfortunate a youth, yet beautiful because it takes a people's hopes in hand, however strangely. The child's birth, as King of Rome, was hailed by Europe as a guarantee of peace, uniting the Napoleonic war power with the family of Kings. Truly, this is different.

Son of Napoleon, heir of the empire, born in the Tuilleries, the Aiglon lived three years in France, baby idol. After Napoleon's abdication the allies confided him to the Emperor of Austria, his grandfather. He never saw France again. But, just as Napoleon at St. Helena continued begging for his boy in vain, so the common people of France continued buying copies of his various portraits, whose supply never equaled the demand.

The legend is that he was "killed by kindness." Growing up a gilded princeling in a corrupt court, he was led into pleasures weakening to his tender years, while cunningly deflected from healthy exercise. Rostand makes him turn the danger, nobly aided in secret, though too late. There is no need to believe that the danger existed. The heroic explanation of the Aiglon's death is quite sufficient—he died of sorrow.

He had the education of an Archduke of his time. He was not prevented from reading about his father and his campaigns. On the other hand, they kept him isolated, strictly, from France, the French and all Bonapartist sympathizers.

The Aiglon lived in a gilded prison. So living, he developed a veritable cult for his father, and desired only to resemble him. Recognizing that he could not begin as Emperor of the French—though aware that he had been proclaimed Napoleon II by the Chamber of the Hundred Days—he craved for the throne of Poland or Greece, successively promised and withheld from him. Colonel of a simple Austrian regiment, he was not even allowed to command his men. They feared that the Napoleonic genius might blaze out in him.

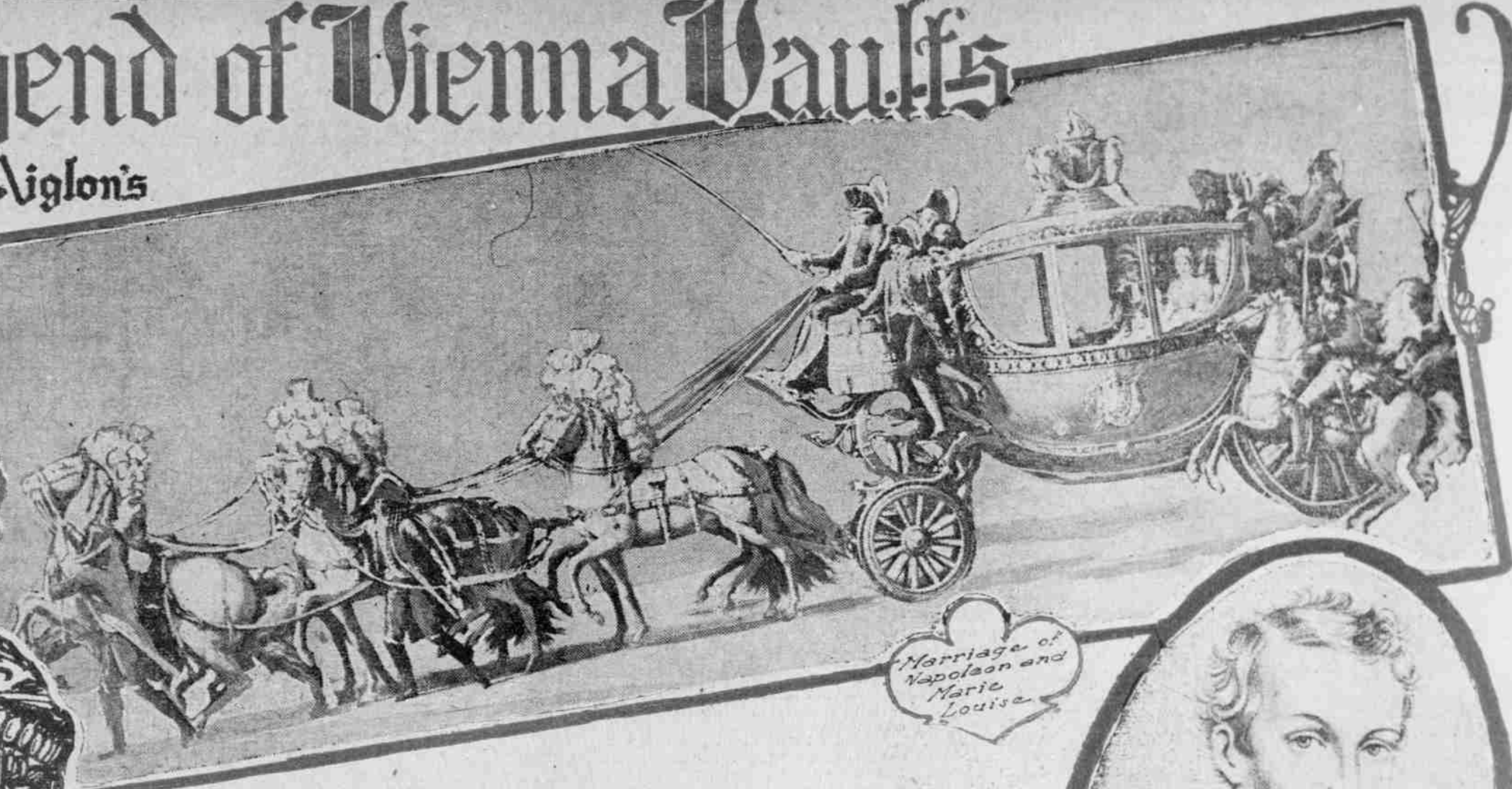
He hoped it might. He mourned to death, at 21, because he lost his hope.

And now for the strange story of Vienna:

He sleeps in the black Kapuziner-crypt, along with cased Emperor and Archdukes. For outsiders the dismal labyrinths have harrowing yet fascinating reputation. The endless vaults under the court church are ostensibly connected with the palace by broad subterranean passages, used by the court on great funeral occasions. In them, during the Kossuth struggles, a band of Danubian confederates, seeking entrance to kidnap the Emperor, was treacherously permitted to penetrate half way and then mowed down by cannon. Their shrieking ghosts are said to dash confusedly through a maze of secret passages, but in remote chambers these common or garden ghosts are themselves, terrified by gibbering wraiths, who exceed them in horror.

What are they? Suffering spirits of faithless palace servants, lost 500 years back, hunting for "the treasure."

The treasure! There is certainly a treasure. The Capuchins crypts are ruled, they say, by the terrible dead Emperor Mathias, who guards forgotten crown jewels, chests of ancient booty, bags of diamonds and rubies, barrels of coined gold and ingots, loot of the Turks at the doors of Vienna, treasure of Venice, tribute wrung



Marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise



The Aiglon as Duke of Reichstadt, Painted the Year Before He Died.



will come to light unexpectedly, and only on a particular occasion—when the Hapsburg dynasty has vital need.

Also, in the crypt, dwells the skull.

What skull? Nobody knows. It is the skull. It warns the Hapsburg family just before they die. It is unique. The doomed one finds the skull lying on his bed. They carry it back, with fearful veneration, to the Capuchin vaults. Then the warned one makes his will.

In such surroundings lies Napoleon's son, half French by blood, all French by birth and spirit. What has he to do with these old Hapsburg skuleries?

Why, this—and here comes in the queer part. The day before the Aiglon's death they found lying on his bed, not the skull—for he was not a Hapsburg—but a great black, ancient iron key.

"The key of Black Mathias!" said an aged, doddering valet. When they asked him why he said it, he replied: "My father served the castle back 300 years. It would be strange if I should not know the key of Black Mathias!" And not another word could they get out of him.

And one more thing Vienna tells about the Aiglon. Joseph Balsamo, the famous Count Cagliostro who predicted the French revolution and so the fate of so many of its actors, finally perished in the Castle of St. Angelo, Rome. Wandering from France after the adventure of the Queen's necklace, he was temporarily imprisoned in Vienna. How he escaped has always been disputed, but it would seem that he impressed a cousin of the Emperor by revelations and predictions. Among other things, they told him of the treasure which

from Bohemian, Polish and Magyar magnates, dark riches, unclean, to be purified only by some noble use. None of the succeeding Emperors have found them. Many sought. Horrible tales are told of lost engineers. They say, even, that a later Emperor added to the hoard, or, rather, salted down a supplementary treasure. It was that Duke Francis of Lorraine who, marrying Maria Theresa, became Emperor, but did not resign. He devoted his talents and opportunities to vast financial speculations. They netted him some \$40,000,000, they say, on which he spent five years in liquidating, very skillfully, into gold and jewels. In any case, it was not found after his death. And it is useless to seek it in the crypts. Tradition tells that the treasure

The Aiglon as a Child in the Park at Schoenbrunn Outside Vienna. This is the Picture Which Was Conceded to Napoleon at St. Helena.



ought to be discovered, unexpectedly, in the great need of the Hapsburgs, and asked him for a calculation of the date when need and discovery would coincide. His reply was inexplicable—"When the boy goes home."

How connect it with the Aiglon? The Aiglon was not born.

Men shrugged their shoulders. Austria was prosperous. And through the century no wars, however, unsuccessful, threatened the dynasty with vital need. The Great Napoleon married into the family. The birth of a son was joy to Europe. His death was probably no less a joy. And the adventure of the key was forgotten as a servants' mystery.

Nowadays, however, Vienna is in fever. The enemy advances. Sedition is in the Empire. The dynasty is threatened.

The most fantastic rumors find belief. The dynasty is threatened. Now is the time for the treasure. All becomes clear.

The boy is the key to the treasure—aye, the dead by whose birth was hailed 100 years ago as Austria's boy. The treasure is in the crypts. Where is the big, black ancient key of Black Mathias?

Nobody knows. No matter. "When the boy goes home," said Cagliostro.

It is obvious, argues Vienna. The boy is Napoleon's son, and home means Paris. Whether or not the French want him, in removing the Aiglon from the crypts, the treasure will be found. A crumbling wall, a sunken slab, or other accident will show it.

The Aiglon as a Boy of Eight, the Famous Portrait by Lavie.