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## Late 19th-c Autograph Photograph Of Aristocrat Marie Edouardovna Kleinmichel Lafayette Studio



400 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Paper

### Description

Autographed XIX<sup>th</sup> century photograph - uncertain between albumen and silver print - mounted in an oval passe-partout and framed. The portrait depicts a lady of high birth, dressed in an elegant gown, adorned with a star-shaped brooch, and coiffed according to the aristocratic fashion of the late 19th century. At the bottom of the image appears a handwritten dedication in French: «Votre vieille amie / V. Kleinmichel», which strongly suggests the identity of a member of the noble Kleinmichel family, connected to the Russian imperial court: Mary Edouardovna Kleinmichel, née Von Keller (the identification was made possible by comparing our photograph with the one published on [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Marie\\_Eduardovna\\_Kleinmichel](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Marie_Eduardovna_Kleinmichel)). A blind stamp,

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placed beneath the oval, bears the prestigious motto of the Order of the Garter, «Honi soit qui mal y pense», accompanied by a royal crown. This photograph is the work of the Lafayette studio, whose signature appears on the right side of the portrait. Founded in Dublin in 1880 by James Stack Lauder, known as Lafayette, the studio quickly established itself as one of the most illustrious portrait ateliers in Europe. As early as 1887, James Lafayette was invited to Windsor to photograph Queen Victoria and was granted the title of Photographer Royal. The opening of the Bond Street branch in London in 1897 sealed the international reputation of the house, which immortalized sovereigns, aristocrats, diplomats, and celebrities from all over the world. As mentioned at the beginning, the identification of the process remains uncertain: the period - circa 1890 - the glossy surface and sepia tone point towards an albumen print, while certain material characteristics could also correspond to a silver gelatin bromide print. As for the condition, it is very good: the moisture stain visible on the passe-partout does not affect the photograph in any way. Dimensions: with frame 24 × 31 cm; oval photograph 13 × 19 cm. Marie Edouardovna Kleinmichel, born Countess Maria von Keller (1846-1931) was a prominent figure of the Russian aristocracy and a refined memoirist. She came from the noble German-Baltic von Keller family, allied with major European houses, and married Count Nikolai Petrovich Kleinmichel (1836-1878), son of the powerful Russian Minister of Transport, Count Pyotr Andreyevich Kleinmichel. She became known as Marie Kleinmichel through her memoirs *Memories of a Shipwrecked World*, a vivid account of the social and aristocratic life of St. Petersburg on the eve of the Revolution. In the salons of the imperial capital, she was one of the great hostesses of Russian society, described by contemporaries as wealthy, proud, and fond of gossip. After the 1917 Revolution, she went into exile and spent her final years in Western Europe. She is also

remembered as an amateur painter, active in the second half of the 19th century. In summary, Marie Edouardovna Kleinmichel embodies the figure of a cosmopolitan countess, writer, and privileged witness to the twilight of the Russian aristocratic world.