

THE
EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

BY THE
BARON DE MÉNEVAL



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THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE



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THE
EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

BY THE
BARON DE MENEVAL
MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
By D. D. FRASER

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INTRODUCTION

CERTAIN circumstances have put us in possession of numerous letters, for the most part autographs, addressed by Queen Hortense to the Abbé Bertrand, formerly chaplain to the Empress Josephine's daughter, and her children's first tutor. We also possess forty-seven letters, written in his own hand by her youngest son, afterwards the Emperor Napoleon III, and addressed to the same Abbé Bertrand.*

In Queen Hortense's letters, which are now before us, frequent mention is naturally made of the Empress Josephine, and this has given us the idea of retracing the principal aspects of the life of the Emperor Napoleon's first wife, full as it was of surprises and of contrasts.

From the downfall of the Imperial *régime* in 1815, it need hardly be said that insult and calumny were heaped upon the principal members of the Bonaparte family. The Empress Josephine, as may easily be supposed, was not spared any more than the others. Her reputation became the object, at this period, of

* None of these letters have been published.

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the most unjust attacks ; she has even at the present day been treated more severely than fairly by some modern authors.

Queen Hortense, maligned as she was herself also by the libels of the time, could not but take her mother's part and defend energetically the character of one whose memory was so dear to her. It will be admitted that she would have proved very ungrateful had she done otherwise. The preface she wrote to the collection of Napoleon's letters to his first wife, a curious collection published by Didot in 1832, contains some sharp criticisms of several passages in the *Mémorial* of St Helena. If Napoleon had been able to re-read at leisure this last-mentioned work, it is probable that his notes, like those he has left on Fleury de Chaboulon's book, would on more than one point have given a new version of his opinions, or rather of those attributed to him by the narrator of these interviews.

However this may be, we shall quote here some passages from Queen Hortense's correspondence with the Abbé Bertrand, a correspondence which extends from 1824 to 1836, and which continued till the end of her life. On the 9th March 1825 Hortense wrote a long letter to her former chaplain, from which we make the following extract :

‘ . . . I have read, like you, all these works that have just been published ; the conversations are devoid of common sense. How can one attempt to repeat that which one has often difficulty in hearing correctly and which is so evanescent that the tone and expres-

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sion sometimes convey much more than the words. When the Emperor said with a smile and a satisfied air : "*My wife was jealous,*" he seemed pleased about it ; M. de las Cases, who has repeated the remark, but who cannot breathe life into the printed page or paint for us the speaker's expression of countenance, becomes thereby an unfaithful reporter, seeing that he depicts for us a malevolent remark, while what he really heard was a benevolent one. I am convinced that this is so by what he said to me at Frankfort when I met him : "*How the Emperor loved your mother,*" he said, "*how often he spoke to me with pleasure about her ! My manuscripts are full of her praises, uttered by the Emperor in my hearing.*" You see, my dear Abbé, how he has defeated his own purpose, for it is his book that has given rise to the libel, at which you have been rightly so incensed. It was something new and appetising to speak evil of my mother ; as far as I am concerned, it was an old habit ; what was said about myself I passed over with scorn, nor was it that which affected me most. . . .'

In another letter from Queen Hortense addressed to the same ecclesiastic, written at Arenenberg on 9th October 1825, there occurs such a lively and bitter criticism of the *Mémorial* and of M. de las Cases that we have hesitated to reproduce it. Still, as we cannot claim the right either to challenge or support the opinions of Josephine's daughter, the reader will agree with us that the responsibility for them remains with her. The following is the angry paragraph she devotes to this work, which from many points of view

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is so interesting and so remarkable: ‘ . . . I have received your letter on the subject of M. Dulaure’s work; it seems simple enough that he has obtained from M. de las Cases’ book details which he must have thought true, and who would have said that falsehood and calumny about the Empress Josephine would come from that quarter! If I were not lazy, I would amuse myself by writing what I recognised in the *Mémorial* as dictated by the emperor, and what was M. de las Cases’ own invention.’

Poor Queen Hortense! What would she have said now on reading how her mother is maligned in certain works to which a frivolous public attaches an importance they do not deserve. No one, it is true, is a good judge in his own cause, and whatever the wife of Louis Bonaparte may say, the Count de las Cases may have been a more faithful interpreter of the conversations at St Helena than the former Queen of Holland seems disposed to believe. . . .

A little further on, in the same letter, the queen adds the following picturesque observation, ‘After all, as I said before, we are big *Marionnettes*, made to act our parts to amuse the passers-by and to bring in money, and I shall be Her Highness the Moon or Her Majesty the Sun according to the whim of the showman. . . .’

Would not one think that this observation was written to describe what so often happens to-day according to narratives which lay claim to historic accuracy?

Two other letters written by Queen Hortense contain passages referring to the same idea, which deserve,

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perhaps, to be quoted. In one of them, dated 3rd January 1834, the mother of Napoleon III utters this aphorism :

‘History is already commencing for us and where will facts concerning my career be sought for? In libels which have remained unanswered since 1815.’

Finally, not to trespass too much on the reader’s patience, we shall close our quotations from Queen Hortense’s writings by a last paragraph, taken from a letter addressed like the previous ones to Abbé Bertrand, and dated the 30th January 1835, about a year before the queen’s death :

‘It is always the same kind of pusillanimity I know so well : “Do not let us speak of the past ! do not let us stir the ashes of the dead !” they say,—but history, having no respect for the ashes of the dead, and living entirely on the records of the past, comes and draws us a picture copied from libellous accounts, and the picture remains thus drawn because of the weakness and ingratitude of contemporaries. I live far from the world, my dear Abbé, and I do not regret it. I see it from such a distance and from such a height that it seems to me to become more insignificant every day ; at least that world of the large cities where the noise, the bustle and the dust prevent one from seeing or judging of anything sanely.’

There is certainly a great deal of truth in these reflections of a bitter philosophy, penned by this poor queen, fallen from her high estate, who did not live long enough to take part in the apotheosis of her son, the Emperor Napoleon III.

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In undertaking the narration of the principal events which have marked the career of the Empress Josephine, whose history has been so faithfully recorded by a writer of talent, M. Aubenas, we shall not attempt to relate over again for the reader's benefit a legion of well known incidents, but we shall be in a position, we believe, to acquaint him with more than one detail of interest, which has never been published. We hope to attain this result, thanks to letters which have been scrupulously preserved among our collection of autographs, and to our private researches. In brief, if the Empress Josephine was not exempt from some weaknesses, she was never in our judgment the selfish and perverse woman, whose memory and fair fame certain authors seem to have undertaken to destroy. She was Napoleon's good genius, and seconded him nobly in the work of national regeneration, undertaken in consequence of the overthrow of everything which had been achieved as the result of a bloody revolution. The weaknesses, moreover, with which she has been charged, have received an extraordinarily full treatment in works inspired by a deliberate *parti pris*. Those who have been Josephine's worst detractors, being unable to furnish precise information as to her errors of conduct, have generally been reduced to searching for accusations against her in pamphlets which they even abstain from naming. We may add that no one has been able to discover any serious fault with which to reproach her, from the moment she ascended the throne with her consort. Her grace, her proverbial goodness, her kind disposition so full of sweetness and

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charm, had made a conquest of all hearts ; and after all, she never even felt, much less harboured, either hatred or ill-will for her worst enemies. This is a rare meed of praise, which few as highly placed as the Empress Josephine have merited from posterity. In conclusion a last touching tribute of respectful esteem has been paid to her memory by the Duke of Reichstadt himself. In one of his conversations with his intimate confidant, M. de Prokesch-Osten, Napoleon's son expressed himself with reference to his father's first wife in the following terms : " If Josephine had been my mother, my father would not have been at St Helena, and I would not be languishing at Vienna. . ."*

The unfortunate prince had every reason for forming this opinion, for the Empress Josephine, very different in this from Marie-Louise, was above all things an incomparable mother. The filial piety which her son, Prince Eugène, and her daughter, Queen Hortense, never ceased to exhibit towards her on every occasion, both during her life and after her death, has justified the remark uttered by the Duke of Reichstadt, and preserved at Vienna amongst the papers of M. de Prokesch-Osten, which for long remained unpublished.

* The *Duc de Reichstadt*, by Henri Welschinger, in accordance with the unpublished notes of the Chevalier de Prokesch-Osten, p. 53. Publishers, de Soye et fils, Paris, 1907.

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CHAPTER I

MARIE JOSEPH ROSE TASCHER DE LA PAGERIE was born at Martinique, on the property of his parents, at Trois Ilets, on the 23rd of June 1763. His father, M. Tascher, had served with the troops garrisoning this island and had helped to defend it against the attacks of the British fleet during the American war in Louis XVI's reign. The mother of the future empress was Mlle. de Sanois, who also belonged to a Creole family. The reader must not, however, expect to find in this sketch a genealogical history of these two families, for M. Aubenas, the estimable author of a biography of the Empress Josephine, has given many interesting details on this subject, which it would be superfluous to repeat.*

The school education of Mlle. de la Pagerie, like that of all children of Creole parents brought up in the colonies, was characterized by the *laissez aller* and carelessness which were tolerated there in those early days ; but this was by no means the case with her home

* See *PHistoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*, by J. Aubenas, 1859. Published by Amyot, rue de la Paix, Paris.

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training, which was conducted with the greatest care, as was only natural in a refined society where the cult of courtesy and good manners was a matter of tradition. This kind of education, the want of which always makes itself felt in later life, was a privilege enjoyed by the future Viscountess de Beauharnais, and was destined to make her the accomplished woman of the world which she afterwards became.

Josephine's youth was passed peacefully under the sunny skies of the Antilles, in whose genial climate winter and frosts are unknown, in the midst of the negro slaves of her paternal domain. Her natural kindness of heart made her very much beloved by these poor creatures, who looked upon her as their guardian angel and whose miseries and infirmities she relieved. According to a well authenticated story, an old negro woman, who was somewhat of a sorceress, predicted at this period a very high destiny for her; and as this prophecy was fully realised in a most extraordinary manner at a much later date, it is possibly the origin of the superstitious leanings which all Josephine's biographers agree in attributing to her.*

* *'Almost queen. . . . More than queen. . . . Veiled queen. . . .'* Such were the predictions made to three young girls of Martinique at two different periods by fortune-telling negroesses, and all three prophecies came true.

The first was made to Françoise d'Aubigné, who had taken refuge with her father at Martinique. Nothing foreshadowed the success of the prophecy as long as Françoise d'Aubigné remained the wife of Scarron; but we know that she became Madame de Maintenon and 'almost queen.'

Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie was very uncertain of the future, even when she was the wife of the general Viscount de Beauharnais

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One of Mlle. de la Pagerie's aunts, Mme. de Renaudin, a woman with a strong will and a fertile imagination, conceived the plan of letting her come to France and arranging a marriage which would be as advantageous to herself as to her niece. She had for long been intimate with the Beauharnais family and dreamed of drawing the bonds of friendship still closer. For several years Mme. de Renaudin had been on excellent terms with the old Marquis de Beauharnais, ex-Commodore of the Fleet, whose acquaintance she had made during one of his visits to Martinique and of whom she had never since lost sight.

This clever lady resolved to employ all her wits and tact to bring her matrimonial negotiations to a successful issue. The Marquis de Beauharnais had a son, the Viscount Alexander, who was still quite a young man, and it was on him that Mme. de Renaudin had fixed her choice for her niece. A youth of nineteen is easily influenced by a clever and insinuating woman of nearly twice his age, especially when this woman is already received into his father's family on a footing of intimacy.

and even when she married the young general Bonaparte, who however made her 'more than queen.'

As to the third, who was destined to reign in the shade, this was Mlle. Dubuc de Rivery, contemporary and relative of Josephine Tascher. She was taken prisoner at sea by pirates and transported to the harem at Constantinople, where she became the Sultan's favourite wife.

Abd-ul-Aziz, grandson of the last mentioned, reminded Napoleon III smilingly of this relationship, when he visited the International Exhibition of Paris in 1867.

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Mme. de Renaudin had succeeded in obtaining the approval of the Tascher de la Pagerie family for her schemes in favour of her young niece. A very courteous exchange of letters formed a prelude to the negotiations which were commenced with a view to the proposed union, and Josephine, accompanied by her father, embarked on the *Pomone* and arrived at Brest towards the end of the year 1779. The choice had fallen at first on her younger sister, whose age was more in accordance with that of Alexander de Beauharnais, but the young lady showed no inclination to leave her parents. She died not long afterwards at Martinique.

From the moment that Josephine set foot on French soil Mme. de Renaudin took possession of her and did her utmost to bring about a complete transformation in her niece. This affectionate aunt, whom a residence of twenty years in the capital of the kingdom had made a true *Parisienne*, undertook to teach the young Creole worldly wisdom and everything in which a somewhat neglected education had left her deficient. Her education accomplished, the marriage of Josephine and Alexander de Beauharnais was celebrated on the 13th of December 1779 in the church of Noisy-le-Grand. The bridegroom was only nineteen years of age and the bride only sixteen; was it to be expected that M. de Beauharnais would possess sufficient experience and the necessary tact to guide his young wife in the many delicate questions which might arise? The reader will learn from the following pages that Alexander de Beauharnais proved himself incapable of

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accomplishing this always difficult task ; his youth indeed rendered such a result inevitable.

Josephine also on her side was not altogether free from blame, if we are to believe a letter addressed by her youthful consort to his former tutor, M. Patricol. From this letter, which is to be found in M. Aubenas' work, we make a few extracts :

‘When I saw Mlle. de la Pagerie,’ he writes, ‘I thought I could live happily with her ; I at once formed the plan of reforming her education and of making up by my earnest endeavours for the first fifteen neglected years of her life. Shortly after our union however I found in her a want of confidence in me which surprised me, as I had done everything to inspire such confidence, and this discovery has, I confess, somewhat cooled my zeal for her instruction.

* * * * *

‘Instead of staying at home the greater part of the day and sitting opposite a person who has nothing to say to me, I now go out a great deal more than I intended to do and I am resuming again to some extent my old bachelor existence. Do not think, however, that it is without a pang that I relinquish the hope I had cherished of a happy married life. Although I have been leading a very worldly life since I have regained my liberty, I have not lost the taste for occupation. I am quite ready to give the preference to the happiness of home life and domestic peace rather than to the tumultuous pleasures of society, but I imagined that if I acted thus and my wife really felt

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any affection for me, she would make some efforts to draw me to her and to acquire those qualities which I love and which are capable of keeping me at her side. Well, just the opposite of what I had hoped has taken place.'

When such evidences of misunderstanding are apparent from the first in the marital relations, a complete absence of harmony is only a question of time, and the breach will necessarily widen by degrees between a husband and wife thus unsuited to each other. Of all the causes which tend to break the conjugal bond, incompatibility of temper is undeniably the most serious, since temporary reconciliations however tactfully effected do not prevent the continual recurrence of the troubles arising therefrom.

However this may be, Josephine, after two years of wedded life, gave birth to a son who was destined to shed lustre on the name of Beauharnais and to be known afterwards as Prince Eugène. This event, which might have brought the parents nearer to each other, only resulted in a very temporary improvement in their relations, in spite of the efforts of Mme. de Renaudin and of the Beauharnais family to render it lasting and thorough. Alexander de Beauharnais soon became again absorbed in his military career and duties, and Josephine found herself once more abandoned by her young and flighty consort, who shortly afterwards took ship for Martinique. The Marquis de Bouillé was engaged at this time in fitting out a naval expedition to the Antilles, with the object of capturing Jamaica and forcing the English to make

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peace. M. de Bouillé had accepted Alexander de Beauharnais' offer to take service under him in the campaign which was being set on foot. Josephine's husband therefore took his departure for Brest in September 1782, leaving her *enceinte* for the second time ; but he had hardly arrived at Martinique, where he made the acquaintance of the various members of the Tascher family, when the news reached the colony that the preliminaries of peace between France and England had been signed. The treaty of Versailles, concluded some months later, restored to the English the conquests made by M. de Bouillé in the Antilles and thus rendered Viscount de Beauharnais' voyage useless. His brief stay at Martinique only served to embitter the relations, already somewhat cold, between him and Josephine's family. A somewhat sharp correspondence between Alexander de Beauharnais and his father-in-law, Mons. Tascher, finally extinguished any hope of conciliation between them.

Alexander returned to Paris, after a quick passage across the Atlantic, extremely angry at the reproaches contained in M. de la Pagerie's letters and in a state of great exasperation against Josephine and her parents. He at once gave practical proof of this exasperation by petitioning the Paris parliament for a separation from his unfortunate wife.

All the time this suit, which lasted nearly a year, was pending, the young Viscountess de Beauharnais resided almost uninterruptedly at the Abbey of Panthemont, in the rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain. In

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1783 she gave birth to a daughter, who was to become at a later date Queen Hortense, mother of Napoleon III. A decree of the parliament of Paris decided the suit in Josephine's favour; the whole Beauharnais family had already sided with her against her husband. Her father-in-law, the Marquis de Beauharnais, had rented a house for his daughter-in-law and himself at Fontainebleau, where Josephine later on was to occupy the throne as empress. Her aunts Mmes. de Renaudin and Fanny de Beauharnais took up their abode there at the same time and kept their niece company for about three years.

M. Aubenas, in his interesting history of Napoleon's first wife, informs us as to the names of the principal persons who were on visiting terms at Fontainebleau with Josephine and the Beauharnais. Amongst others he mentions M. de Montmorin, governor of the town, M. and Mme. de Chezac, Milles. Ceconi, M. Huë and his daughters, Viscount and Viscountess de Béthizy, M. and Mme. Jamain, and lastly M. d'Acy.*

In the month of June 1788, Josephine de Beauharnais, still separated from her husband, gave way to the entreaties of her parents and resolved to go and rejoin them at Martinique. She proceeded to Havre and embarked there with her daughter Hortense, the vessel which bore them nearly foundering in a violent storm that overtook them shortly after leaving port. At the end of a crossing that was not marked by any further incident

* Aubenas, Vol. i.

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of an untoward nature, Josephine set foot at last on her native isle and enjoyed a period of rest and quietness there in the midst of her family and of the scenes of her childhood. Mlle. Cochelet, reader to Queen Hortense, who was at Havre with that princess in 1815 when the latter was hesitating whether to embark for England or the Antilles, has recorded what she said at the time in referring to the voyage she made with her mother to Martinique in 1788. This is what Mlle. Cochelet relates on this subject in her *Souvenirs* :

‘A small vessel was leaving for the islands ; we went to visit her. “How I would like to make a voyage to Martinique,” the queen said to me. “I was four years old when I came to this port with my mother, who wanted to go and see her native land once more. We embarked at Havre and I recollect that a tremendous wind nearly capsized the ship at the very mouth of the Seine. I remember quite well the terror my mother was in, though I have forgotten where we were staying.”’

‘She used to tell me, while we were seated on the ship’s deck, some of her recollections of the islands where she remained till her seventh year ; she would describe the part of the country where her grandmother’s house was situated ; she had not forgotten the slaves who carried her in her palanquin, nor those poor negroes, whom the empress would never allow to be punished.’

At this time some disquieting symptoms, premonitory of the revolution, were manifesting them-

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selves in France and were even making themselves felt as far as the Antipodes. The inhabitants of Martinique, whose existence had been quiet enough up to that time, themselves experienced the shock. The Viscount Alexander de Beauharnais had been one of the first to constitute himself a champion of those liberal ideas, greatly in vogue in Paris since the termination of the war which had resulted in the emancipation of the United States. The happy time of worldly amusements, joyous festivities and frivolous pleasures had come to an end. Ideas and reflections of a more serious nature were beginning to take possession of the minds even of the youngest. The dissipated existence which Alexander de Beauharnais had hitherto led, was no longer in season. This he understood and he soon began to regret the loss of his wife and of a home to which he had seemed for several years to attach so little value. Josephine's husband, rendered wise by the signs of the coming crisis which he felt was at hand, at last began to amend his ways, and took steps to secure the return of his wife and her daughter. Was the hour of a lasting reconciliation at length about to strike? Josephine thought so, and towards the end of 1790, in spite of the entreaties of her parents, she made preparations for departure in order to take her place again at her husband's side. After a rapid crossing Mme. de Beauharnais arrived in Paris during the month of October, and received a warm and affectionate welcome from her husband and from her son Eugène, then a boy of ten.

CHAPTER II

IN spite of the saying that 'the absent are always in the wrong' it sometimes happens that the prolonged separation of two persons who have disagreed is sufficient to bring them back to a more sensible view of things and to re-establish an amicable understanding between them. This is what happened for the period, a very brief one it is true, of Josephine's reconciliation with her husband. It was, however, no domestic storm but the tempest of revolution which was so soon to break the bond uniting husband and wife.

During Josephine's absence Alexander de Beauharnais, enamoured of the new ideas which were spreading, had become a person of some political importance. The nobility of the bailiwick of Blois had elected him deputy to the States-General; he had reached at this period the rank of major of infantry. Full of generous ideals and of confidence in the schemes of reform which were on foot, Josephine's husband had been one of the forty-seven members of the nobility who, at the close of the sitting where the oath of the 'Tennis Court' was taken, voted for the union of their order with that of the 'Third Estate.' On the memorable night of 4th August

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he had been one of the most eager to make the sacrifice of the feudal rights which he had enjoyed from his birth. The adoption of this attitude, which appealed so strongly to the aspirations of the majority towards the close of the 18th century, resulted in M. de Beauharnais first being elected secretary of the National Assembly and, a little later, becoming its President.

On her return to France and arrival in Paris, Josephine had at once installed herself in a mansion occupied by her husband in the Rue de l'Université opposite the Rue de Poitiers. Soon afterwards she received the news of the death of her father, which occurred on 6th November 1790, a few days after she had quitted the paternal roof. The Viscountess de Beauharnais was then twenty-seven years of age and her husband thirty. She was in the full bloom of her youth and had acquired perfect manners. M. Aubenas' book also informs us what persons used to be admitted to her intimate society. There were in addition to her father-in-law and her aunts, Mlle. Fanny de Beauharnais and Mme. de Renaudin, Count Mathieu de Montmorency, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, a relative of her husband, the Marquis de Caulaincourt, the Prince of Salm-Kirbourg and his sister, the Princess of Hohenzollern. The devoted efforts of this prince of Salm to restore Josephine's children to their mother were destined afterwards at the height of the Terror to cost him his life.*

Meantime stirring events were happening in rapid succession ; hardly a day passed without some new

* Aubenas, Vol. i.

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alarm. On the 20th June 1791 Paris awoke to learn the news of the flight of the unfortunate Louis XVI and the royal family, who were shortly afterwards arrested at Varennes. Alexander de Beauharnais was then president of the Assembly and it was in this capacity that he was commissioned to inform the deputies of this alarming occurrence. An account of the political rôle played by Josephine's first husband in the parliamentary Assemblies does not come within the scope of this work. We therefore refer those readers who desire to know more of this matter to M. Aubenas' most interesting book, fully supported as it is by documentary evidence. We shall confine ourselves to repeating his statement that Alexander de Beauharnais, according to the unanimous verdict of all his biographers, exhibited a dignity and an aptitude for leading a great Assembly, which won for him the unqualified praise and applause of his enemies as well as of his friends.

The Legislative Assembly had succeeded to the National Assembly, and Europe, irritated at the humiliation inflicted on royalty in this country, was beginning to adopt a threatening attitude towards France. Viscount de Beauharnais remembered he was a soldier. After being ordered to rejoin the army of the North, which was under Luckner's command, he was entrusted shortly afterwards with the command of a camp formed near Soissons. Soon afterwards he was attached, in the capacity of brigadier-general and chief of the staff, to the army of the Rhine under the orders of General de Bron.

During these warlike preparations the revolution was

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pursuing its course and progressing with rapid steps. Louis XVI and his family, after the humiliations of the 20th June 1792, were imprisoned in the 'Temple' on the 10th August. On the eleventh of the same month the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, Alexander de Beauharnais' relative, was assassinated at Gisors, almost at the same time that Count Charles de Rohan-Chabot became a victim at Paris of the massacre at the Abbaye. The latter was Alexander's nephew, schoolfellow and friend. Only a few weeks after the 10th August the horrible massacres of September took place, followed by the meeting of the Convention and the proclamation of the Republic. Finally on the 21st January 1793 the execution of the weak but good-natured Louis XVI inaugurated the Reign of Terror and the guillotine.

Mme. de Beauharnais, during this period so prolific of horrors, wept for the fate of the unfortunate monarch and the royal family, accustomed as she was from the days of her childhood to love and respect those unhappy rulers. She must however have congratulated herself on the knowledge that her husband was away on the frontier, far from the butchers who were supplying the guillotine with victims and from the pikes of the murdering *sans-culottes*. Josephine had considered it her duty in these tragic circumstances to place her children temporarily under the care of her friend the Princess of Hohenzollern, who had taken refuge at this period in Artois; she hoped thus to put them out of the reach of all danger. General de Beauharnais however, when he heard of this arrangement, sent a courier from

Strasburg to demand the immediate return of Hortense and Eugène to Paris ; his orders were obeyed, but, as we have mentioned, their fulfilment proved fatal to the unhappy Prince of Salm-Kirbourg.

During this period the old Marquis de Beauharnais, Josephine's father-in-law, continued to live quietly at Fontainebleau, where, thanks to a certificate of citizenship which he managed to obtain in the month of February 1793, he was left quite undisturbed. Mme. de Renaudin, who was much loved in the town and had always borne herself with great tact, faithfully kept him company and was also able to come to the aid of her niece. Josephine generally remained in Paris in her house in the Rue de l'Université, in order to show the confidence she and her husband (who had meanwhile become commander-in-chief of the army of the Rhine), placed in the revolutionary party, now all-powerful in this much tried city. This confidence was certainly more simulated than genuine, and was, as we know, in no wise justified by subsequent events. However this may be, Josephine did not remain inactive. She collected and passed on to her husband all the information which she thought might be useful to him, and she was assisted in this task by her aunts.

The news transmitted by General de Beauharnais to the Assembly on 22nd July 1793 from the army of the Rhine appeared of good omen and seemed to portend in the near future the raising of the siege of Mayence, which had been undertaken by the allies. The consternation and anger of the Committee of

Public Safety may easily be imagined when the notorious Barère, one of its members, announced to the Convention on the 28th of July that on the contrary Mayence had fallen, having, as he said, been surrendered to the enemy in virtue of an *infamous capitulation* on the 23rd of the month! The army under Beauharnais' command was obliged, in consequence of this reverse, to retreat and fall back in good order on its former position at Weissenburg. The capture of Valenciennes soon afterwards increased the exasperation of the Paris Jacobins, and their blind hatred immediately vented itself on the officers of noble birth. Beauharnais now thought it his duty to send in his resignation as commander of the army of the Rhine. This resignation was not at first accepted, although he had offered to serve in this same army under any chief whom it might please the Convention to place over him. So little ambitious was he by nature that he had already on a former occasion refused the Ministry of War, when his presence was wanted to replace the incapable Bouchotte. Alexander de Beauharnais fell ill and his superiors were at last compelled to accept his resignation. He at once rejoined his wife and children on 25th August, and took refuge with them at his family's estate of la Ferté-Beauharnais, near Blois, where he was soon after elected mayor of his Commune.

In spite of this mark of confidence on the part of his fellow townsmen, the general in his retirement realised he was in danger and lived in perpetual anxiety, while trying to persuade himself that his fears were groundless. Only a few days after his return to

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the bosom of his family, the news of the capture of Toulon by the English served as a pretext for the passing of a decree, which defined who were legally to be regarded as suspected persons. In the terms of this decree the *Moniteur* of 19th September declared to be *suspects* those persons who, whether by their conduct, the society they frequented, their conversation or their writings, had shown themselves to be the partisans of tyranny and feudalism and the enemies of liberty, and those of the late aristocracy, whether husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, or agents, of persons who had emigrated and who had not manifested a persistent attachment to the Revolution. This decree, promulgated against officers who had resigned or had been dismissed, was really aimed at those officers of noble birth whom they particularly desired to ruin. Alexander de Beauharnais' elder brother had lately emigrated, which fact supplied a twofold motive for considering the younger brother as a suspected person. Thence to prison and the scaffold was but a short step. Josephine realised this and in these cruel circumstances acted like a heroine. Putting her trust in the Divine protection she threw in her lot courageously and firmly with that of her husband.

The year 1794 was indeed to become a fateful one to the Beauharnais family, exposed as they were for so many reasons to the suspicious rancour of the Terrorists. Alexander de Beauharnais was arrested in the course of January, and was at first incarcerated in the Luxemburg Palace with several of his companions in arms, whose too great confidence in

the Republic was inevitably to lead to their ruin. Many of them, Beauharnais among the first, might have escaped death by leaving France, which had become an inhospitable country for so many of her best citizens. But the principles of Josephine's husband, which in this respect had remained inflexible, had not permitted him to quit his native soil and to follow the example of his elder brother.

Josephine, in spite of her natural sweetness of disposition and her Creole indolence, exhibited in these trying circumstances an energy that no one would have suspected. At several other critical moments during the course of her chequered career we shall see her display a force of character which excited the wonder of her contemporaries. A more timid and less courageous character than that of Josephine might have been appalled by so many tragic occurrences and threatening dangers. Mme. de Beauharnais, far from losing her head, never for an instant dreamed of flight, and this although she was mother as well as wife, and her husband had never given her any particular cause for a devoted attachment. Nevertheless she realised her duty to its fullest extent and displayed the greatest activity in endeavouring to obtain her husband's release. 'She neglected no possible means, spared herself no pains,' writes M. Aubenas, 'but schemes, visits, letters, entreaties and prayers were all in vain.' During the first three months of the year 1794, eight thousand suspected persons were shut up in the prisons of Paris.*

Josephine's courageous but imprudent attitude could

* Aubenas, Vol. i.

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not but be disastrous to her own safety. She was arrested towards the middle of April and shut up in the old Carmelite convent, which had been turned into a prison, while her husband succeeded in obtaining his transfer to the same building, though to a part separated from that in which his wife was confined. Josephine's greatest grief at this time was the enforced separation from her children without the possibility of knowing what fate was in store for them ; for at all periods of her life she was ever to them the best and tenderest of mothers.

M. Aubenas' history gives some circumstantial details regarding Josephine's conduct in jail. Amongst the prison companions of the future empress he names two women, who have become celebrated in very different ways. The one was the Duchess of Aiguillon, the other the beautiful Mme. Tallien, who was not yet united in the bonds of matrimony with the famous member of the Convention. Our Lady of Thermidor, as she has since been called, was destined to contribute in no small degree, by the love with which she inspired Tallien, to the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Reign of Terror. Here in this Carmelite prison, as in every place where Josephine went or lived, she succeeded in winning all hearts. Her natural kindness of disposition, her evenness of character and lovable and refined manners gained, in this time of her captivity as well as later on the throne, the sympathies and affections of everyone. Her children came to visit her in prison after a fruitless attempt had been made in their name to secure their mother's release.

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M. Arnault, the Academician, relates in his *Souvenirs d'un sexagénaire* the part played by a pug called Fortuné in bringing Josephine news from outside by means of notes hidden under its collar. Indeed, during the whole lifetime of this faithful little dog its owners professed a fondness for it which almost amounted to worship.

At this time the guillotine was incessantly at work, dealing destruction with never flagging activity to thousands of innocent lives. Alexander de Beauharnais, after six months of captivity and cruel suspense, suffered the same fate as so many other unfortunate victims, and on 6th Thermidor, (26th July 1794), mounted the scaffold. Before going to his fate the unfortunate Beauharnais had written a long letter to his wife. Had he remained but three days longer in jail, till the 9th Thermidor, his life would have been saved! Robespierre's fall was the salvation of a large number of prisoners destined for execution, and in particular of Josephine, on whom sentence had already been pronounced.

We are told that a woman announced Robespierre's execution to the prisoners in the Carmelite jail by means of dumb-show : she first spread out her dress before them, then held up a stone to their view and finally bringing the two symbols together ended her pantomime by drawing her hand several times across her throat.*

As soon as Josephine found herself once more at liberty, she hastened to quit Paris with her children and took refuge at Fontainebleau near those of her relatives who had succeeded like herself in escaping from so many dangers.

* Aubenas, Vol. i.

CHAPTER III

MILLE. DE LENORMANT's extremely fantastic tales and the shameless falsehoods of the English Jew Goldsmith, at the commencement of the nineteenth century, have given a distorted account of the Empress Josephine's history, character, and personal appearance. It is not by the perusal of writings so unworthy of attention that the reader should be assisted in forming an opinion as to the real personality of Napoleon's first consort. We cannot believe that any serious historian will ever take the trouble again to publish the extravagant nonsense contained in these ridiculous and impertinent accounts. Two years of widowhood now intervene before Josephine celebrates her second marriage with General Bonaparte. It seems superfluous to describe at much length the particulars of her life during this brief period.

General de Beauharnais' property had been confiscated during the course of the revolutionary period, and Josephine and her children, as also all her husband's relatives who had remained at Fontainebleau, found themselves reduced to a state of poverty bordering on absolute want. Mme. de Beauharnais

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had no prospect of pecuniary assistance except from her mother, Mme. de la Pagerie, who still lived on her property of Trois Ilets at Martinique. This unhappy colony however was much hampered in its communication with the mother country, as it was distracted by a sort of civil war and by the English conquest. Some Dunkerque merchants, amongst others a certain M. Emmery, generously assisted Josephine at this period of distress. As friends of the family of old standing they advanced the general's widow the sums necessary for her most pressing requirements, until such time as Mme. de la Pagerie could remit funds to her daughter and grandchildren.

While awaiting the arrival of these remittances, Josephine and her children were often in great straits and Mme. Ducrest in her *Mémoires* (chapter xxxvi) has not concealed the fact that during the famine in Paris in the year 1795 Madame de Beauharnais considered herself fortunate in getting what she herself called her *daily bread* from a Mme. Dumoulin, an obliging and wealthy lady.*

In the second half of October 1795 Josephine and her children proceeded to Hamburg, so as to be in easier communication with Martinique and to receive her supplies from that island with less difficulty. A banker of this city, M. Mathiessen, an obliging and kind-hearted man, rendered Mme. de Beauharnais important services during her stay

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*. (Published by Barba.)

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in Hamburg. The remittances sent from Martinique by Mme. de la Pagerie to her daughter amounted, according to a letter written by Josephine herself, to the respectable figure of 25,000 francs, the moneys reaching her irregularly in larger or smaller amounts. For these troublous times this was a very considerable sum.

‘It was thus,’ continues M. Aubenas, to whose history we must always refer when speaking of the Empress Josephine, ‘to her friends of Dunkerque and Hamburg, to her mother and to none besides, that this courageous woman appealed in her honourable poverty. Her own authentic letters, simply and naively written, tell us all we want to know concerning this part of the biography of Napoleon’s first wife.’*

As soon as Josephine saw her way to live without being dependent on others, she hastened to return to Paris in the course of the year 1795, and placed her daughter Hortense in the recently established and afterwards famous boarding-school kept by Mme. Campan. We shall not make particular mention in this work of that remarkable woman, whose history is generally known.

The victory of 13 Vendémiaire had at this time established General Bonaparte’s reputation and he had been appointed in consequence Commander-in-chief of the home army with Paris as his headquarters. One day Josephine’s son, the future Prince Eugène, then about fourteen years of age, came to petition

* Aubenas, Vol. i.

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Bonaparte to restore to him the sword of his father General de Beauharnais. 'This youth,' writes the editor of the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*,* 'was Eugène de Beauharnais, afterwards viceroy of Italy. Napoleon, touched by the nature of the boy's request and by his manly and graceful bearing, granted his petition. Eugène shed tears when he saw his father's sword. The general was touched and was so kind to him that Mme. de Beauharnais thought it her duty to come the following day and tender him her thanks. Napoleon hastened to return her visit. Everyone knows the supreme gracefulness of the Empress Josephine and her sweet and attractive manners. The acquaintance soon ripened into intimacy and ere long courtship was followed by marriage.'

Such were the beginnings of the relations which grew up between the future Emperor Napoleon and the future empress, his first wife.

On the 2nd of November 1795 the Directoire was established at the Luxemburg palace. Bonaparte as yet hardly foresaw the high destiny which was in store for him, and only dreamt of making a suitable marriage and settling down into the home life of an ordinary citizen. He had wanted at first to marry Désirée Clary, the sister-in-law of his eldest brother Joseph, a young lady who was to become a little later Mme. Bernadotte and subsequently Queen of Sweden. He had also thought of betaking himself to Constantinople, with the mission of re-organising the Sultan's artillery in

* *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, by the Count de Las Cases.



NAPOLEON IN 1796.

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Turkey. But Fate, as we know, had prepared a very different future for him.

Mme. de Beauharnais had just secured the house of the famous Talma in the Rue Chantreine. The restitution of part of General de Beauharnais' property, confiscated during the height of the revolutionary period, and the regular remittances which came from Martinique had enabled Josephine to resume her housekeeping on a fairly liberal scale. She therefore commenced entertaining with her usual grace the political, literary and artistic celebrities of the day and all that remained of Parisian good society. General Bonaparte promptly became one of the most assiduous frequenters of Mme. de Beauharnais' salon, taking lessons in polite manners till such time as his marriage with Josephine should allow of his borrowing from her some elements of popularity and of political influence.

Madame de Beauharnais was then thirty-two years of age and the general twenty-six. We append here the flattering portrait of Josephine which has been preserved for us in the Memoirs of Constant, Napoleon's principal *valet de chambre*.

'The Empress Josephine was of medium height and possessed a figure modelled with a rare perfection : there was a suppleness and lightness in her movements which imparted a fairy-like grace to every motion without detracting from the queenly majesty of her demeanour. Her expressive features reflected the varied emotions of her heart without ever losing that natural sweetness which was their principal charm. Whether moved by joy or by sorrow she was beautiful

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to look upon. Never did a woman better justify the saying that the eyes are the mirror of the soul. Hers, of a dark blue, were nearly always half closed by long slightly arched eyelids, fringed with the most beautiful lashes ever seen ; and, when she looked thus, one felt oneself drawn towards her by an irresistible power. The empress would have found it difficult to impart severity to this bewitching look, but she could and did, when necessary, render it imposing. Her hair was very beautiful, long and silky ; its colour, a light chestnut, blended admirably with that of her skin, which was of a brilliant purity and freshness.

‘But what contributed more than all the rest to the charm of her person was the entrancing tone of her voice. How often it has happened to me and to many others that we stopped short when we heard her voice, solely to enjoy the pleasure of listening to it. One could not assert perhaps that the empress was a beautiful woman, but her face, so expressive of feeling and goodness, and the angelic grace which characterized her whole personality, made her the most attractive woman in the world.’*

Josephine must have exercised over Napoleon the same fascination as Constant here describes, a fascination which he, like many of his contemporaries, felt in a superlative degree. But from the first it was, as M. Aubenas well expresses it, chiefly by her distinguished bearing and by the superiority of manners and tone which Bonaparte discovered in her, that Mme. de Beauharnais almost unconsciously fascinated her many

* *Mémoires de Constant*, Napoleon’s principal ‘valet de chambre.’

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admirers.* M. Aubenas has not remained silent as to the slander of Josephine's supposed *liaison* with Barras, which, if one were to believe its inventors and disseminators, procured the command of the army of Italy for the charming widow's youthful bridegroom. He speaks of the report with great discretion and reserve and declares the whole story to be absolutely untrue and devoid of all foundation. According to him Bonaparte's nomination to the command of the army of Italy was due to Carnot, the most upright member of the Directoire, an assertion which is confirmed by a passage in the *Mémoires* which have been published concerning this celebrated personage.† However this may be, Josephine at first repudiated the idea of a second marriage of which her children were in ignorance and the possibility of which filled them with alarm. She was not insensible to the tokens of an ever increasing regard which General Bonaparte lavished upon her, but her heart, far from being captivated, remained so far untouched that she was

* *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Georges*, edited in accordance with the original manuscript, by A. Chéramy, 1908.

Visit to Saint-Cloud: 'She (Mlle. Raucourt, the actress) was very often received by Mme. Bonaparte, (wife of the first Consul). We proceeded to Saint-Cloud and Mme. Raucourt was instantly admitted. I then saw the beautiful and gracious Josephine, who approached us with a smile which was so sweet and compelling that it immediately attracted one to her. She was charming! She put one at one's ease, but with the lofty manner, the elegant simplicity, which were her peculiar characteristics. There was a grace in her whole bearing which magnetised one. It was impossible not to bow before so mysterious an influence, so sweet a charm. One loved her before she began to speak, and felt that she brought happiness with her.'

† Aubenas, Vol. i.

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almost tempted to reproach herself with ingratitude. The Tascher de la Pagerie family and her aunts, Mlle. de Beauharnais and Mme. de Renaudin, encouraged Josephine to contract this new union. Her father-in-law, the Marquis de Beauharnais, was himself not inclined to oppose any objections. The widow of Alexander de Beauharnais, however, still hesitated for some time, remembering her first marriage, which had not been a happy one, and somewhat afraid of the arbitrary and imperious character of the young general who was seeking her hand. At last on the 19th Ventôse (9th March 1796) the wedding ceremony between Bonaparte and Josephine was celebrated in Paris at the town hall of the 2nd Arrondissement. None of the churches had as yet been re-opened and the newly married couple dispensed with obtaining a sacerdotal blessing on their union. This neglect of so important a duty on the part of a woman who had been born and bred in the social position to which Josephine belonged cannot but surprise her admirers unpleasantly, even when one takes into account the troubles of these revolutionary times. One is led to suppose that her religious instruction at Martinique, as well as her studies, had been singularly neglected. Many other women in her place, more religiously brought up than Mlle. de la Pagerie, would have refused to be married solely by the civil registrar in spite of the closing of the churches. This grave omission, which remains a blot on Josephine's second marriage, was destined later on, in 1809, to be cruelly expiated by this good, lovable and intelligent woman,

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whose character impartial judges must admit to have been somewhat deficient in depth and seriousness.

As to the civil marriage, it was conducted with an irregularity of procedure only to be excused by the 'laisser-aller' of the period ; the production of certificates of birth was either not required or these documents were examined very superficially. Captain le Marois, one of the witnesses, was born in 1776, and was thus a minor in March 1796, which disqualified him from taking part officially in the transaction.

'Twelve days after this ceremony,' writes M. Aubenas, 'on the 21st of March 1796, Bonaparte bid adieu to his wife and set out for Nice, the headquarters at the moment of the staff of the army of Italy, leaving happiness behind him and entering on that career of glory which awaited him on the fields of Piedmont and Lombardy.'

Napoleon's marriage with the Viscountess de Beauharnais was the subject of the following comment by one of his companions in arms who knew him intimately and was indeed no less a personage than Marshal Marmont :

'I am inclined to think,' he says somewhere in his writings, 'that he (Napoleon) considered he was making by his first marriage a greater advance in the social scale than when, sixteen years later, he shared his nuptial couch with the daughter of the Cæsars !'

We must leave the responsibility for this opinion to the Duc de Raguse ; for our part we think the statement contains a small element of truth and a great deal of exaggeration. The events of 1814 led to such

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a breach between Napoleon and his late aide-de-camp that we must receive with special caution any adverse opinions pronounced by the latter against his former master.

General Bonaparte, on leaving for the plains of northern Italy, where he was soon to gain such decisive and glorious victories, carried in his heart the image of his beloved Josephine, to whom he afterwards addressed the passionate letters which have been published in the Didot collection. Mme. Bonaparte's affection for her husband, at first of a much calmer nature than Napoleon's for her, took some time to reach the same high key. We shall find that the more Josephine's attachment to her young husband increased, the less ardent did his love for her insensibly become, until the moment when it was replaced by a wholesome and solid affection. Meantime Josephine became more and more useful to Napoleon, especially at the period when this great man rose to supreme power. Bonaparte at the time of his marriage had, it must be admitted, only received a very imperfect education. His speech and his manners, which his camp life had not been calculated to improve, were quite out of keeping with the speech and manners of the society of the old *régime*. Josephine, in full possession of that knowledge of the world in which he was deficient, became therefore of great assistance to her husband. She smoothed the angles of his harsh and impetuous character, and initiated him into a number of details which in good society have a much greater importance than those who are ignorant of them suppose.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY has placed on record the series of brilliant exploits achieved by General Bonaparte and the brave troops under his command during this memorable Italian campaign. In spite of her intention of living in seclusion during her husband's absence, the glory of his victories shed a reflected lustre on Josephine, and all classes of society vied with each other in paying her deference and attention and in offering her their congratulations.

Intoxicated as he was with so much success, Napoleon did not forget the wife whom he still adored, and addressed to her a number of ardent and passionate letters, which several historians have thought fit to reproduce in their works. It would be impossible to repeat these here at length, as the list is too long. We shall confine ourselves to a few quotations, commencing with a letter of 5 Floréal (24th April 1796). On this date the commander-in-chief of the army of Italy wrote to his wife :

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Carru, 5 Floréal.

* * * * *

‘Your letters are the chief delight of my days, and my happy days are not many. Junot is bringing twenty-two flags to Paris. You must come back with him, dearest, you understand? . . . If I had the misfortune to see him return alone, my beloved, it would be a calamity beyond remedy, a grief without solace, a continual torment. . . .’

‘But you will return, will you not? You will be here beside me, close to me, in my arms. . . . Take wings and come, come! But travel slowly. The journey is a long and fatiguing one and the roads are bad. If you were to meet with an accident or to come to harm; if fatigue . . . Come speedily, my beloved, but not with too much haste.

‘I have received a letter from Hortense. She is quite charming. I am going to write to her. I love her dearly and I shall soon send her the scents she asks for.—N.B.’

Josephine’s relatives and friends however did their best to keep her in Paris, regarding such a journey as madness, while moreover certain indications of pregnancy seemed also to prescribe delay. Less eager than her young consort to hasten the moment of their reunion, Josephine looked forward with no little apprehension to the inconveniences and even the dangers of such a trip, at a time when highroads and means of conveyance were both so defective.

‘To participate from the outset,’ says M.

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Aubenas, 'in the fatigues and uncertainties of a great war, even to bivouac in the Italian towns, to lead in fact the life of a soldier in the field, this was too much to ask of Josephine's Creole temperament, in which listlessness, if a grace, was also a defect.'

It will not be without interest, we think, to reproduce some passages from a long letter of the 27th Prairial, year IV, (15th June 1796) dated from Tortona and addressed by General Bonaparte to Josephine. Here are a few extracts :—

* * * * *

'I have been accusing you of remaining in Paris and you were ill there. Forgive me, my dearest ; the love you have inspired has deprived me of my reason and I shall never recover it. The disease is an incurable one. My forebodings are so gloomy that I would be content just to see you and to press you to my heart and then to die. Who is taking care of you ? I suppose you have let Hortense come to you. I love that dear child a thousand times more now that I think she may be able to console you a little. As far as I am concerned, I shall have no consolation, no rest and no hope until the courier I am sending you returns and you have explained in a long letter the nature of your illness, and in how far it is a dangerous one. If it is dangerous, I warn you that I shall start at once for Paris. My arrival will put your sickness to flight. I have always been lucky. Never has my destiny resisted my will, and to-day I have received a blow which touches me more nearly than all else.

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Josephine, how can you be so long of writing to me? Your last laconic epistle is dated the 3rd of the month (22nd May 1796); it is indeed a saddening letter for me, but I always keep it in my pocket. Your portrait and your letters are ever before my eyes.

‘I am nothing without you. I can hardly conceive how I existed without knowing you. Oh, Josephine, if you had known my heart, would you have delayed your departure from the 29th to the 16th? Would you have lent an ear to false friends who perhaps wanted to keep us apart? I suspect every one; I am angry with all who are around you. I had calculated that you had left on the 5th, and had arrived at Milan on the 15th.*

* * * * *

‘I am thinking night and day of nothing but your illness. Without appetite, without sleep, without interest for friendship, glory or country, I think only of you, and the rest of the world exists no more for me than if it were annihilated. I care for honour only because you care for it, for victory only because it pleases you, otherwise I should have left everything to throw myself at your feet.’

Two further passages in this long but interesting epistle deserve repetition :

‘What somewhat comforts me,’ Napoleon says in the first, ‘is the thought that, though it is in fate’s

* The first figures ‘the 29th to the 16th’ correspond to 18th May and 4th June, the second, ‘the 5th and the 15th,’ to the 24th May and 3rd June.

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power to make you ill, it is in no one's power to force me to survive you.'

In the second, which ends the letter, Bonaparte writes :

'Adorable woman, how great is your ascendancy ! Your illness makes me ill. Indeed I am in a burning fever ! Do not keep the courier more than six hours, and let him return at once and bring me the precious letter from my queen.—N. B.'

At last Josephine determined to yield to her husband's entreaties, which were so earnest, so tender, and so often repeated, and she started for Italy in the month of June 1796. She was almost quite well again and her children remained under Mme. Campan's judicious motherly care.

Marshal Marmont writes in his *Mémoires* : 'I was sent on to Turin in advance of Madame Bonaparte and had the opportunity of noticing the assiduous attentions which were lavished on her by the Sardinian Court on her passage through that city. Once she had reached Milan General Bonaparte was overjoyed, for now he lived entirely for her : this state of affairs continued for a considerable time ; never did a truer, purer or more exclusive love take possession of a man's heart, and this was a man of such a superior order !' *

Such testimony from the Duke of Ragusa, such a glowing tribute to the sincerity of Napoleon's love for Josephine, seems to us perfectly conclusive.

Welcomed by her husband at Milan with joyous

* *Mémoires du maréchal Marmont.*

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enthusiasm, Josephine took up her residence in the Serbelloni palace, where the officers of highest rank in the French army and the élite of the Milanese aristocracy came to pay her their homage. Unfortunately for the amorous commander-in-chief, the necessity of shewing a bold front to the enemy rendered his speedy return to the field of battle imperative, and obliged him in a few days to part again from the object of his tenderest affections. Bonaparte marched to meet a new Austrian army under the command of Würmser, intending, after beating the enemy, to seize the important town of Mantua.

A few days after her husband's departure Josephine, who remained at Milan in the Serbelloni palace, received a letter from him, dated from Roverbella on 6th July 1796. He wrote: 'I have beaten the enemy. Kilmaine will send you a copy of the despatches. I am half dead with fatigue. I entreat you to start at once for Verona; I need you, for I think I am going to be very ill. I send you a thousand kisses. I am in bed.'

This indisposition of the young and illustrious general was not destined to be of a serious nature nor of long duration, so that he even himself suggested that Josephine should postpone her intended journey to rejoin him. From his headquarters at Marmirolo Bonaparte wrote further to his wife on 10th July as follows:

'I have passed the whole night under arms. I could have seized Mantua by a bold and lucky coup, but the waters of the lake suddenly fell, so that my

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troops, which had already embarked, could not reach the town . . . I have received a letter from Eugène, which I forward to you. Please write on my behalf to these dear children and send them a few trinkets. Tell them that I love them as much as if they were my own children. The things which are yours or mine are so blended in my heart that I feel there is no difference between them. I am very anxious to know how you are and what you are doing. I was in Virgil's village, on the borders of the lake, by moonlight, and Josephine was never absent from my thoughts.'

On the 19th of July General Bonaparte announced to Josephine the bombardment of Mantua and excused himself for having opened and read two letters addressed to her, which he returned. Napoleon, who long afterwards, if we are to believe the *Mémorial* of St-Helena, accused his first wife of being jealous, was much more so than she at the commencement of their union. But we shall be able hereafter to note the gradual modifications which took place in their sentiments towards each other. When Josephine became empress it was she who showed her jealousy, while Napoleon on the contrary no longer exhibited this quality.

When he arrived at Brescia Bonaparte made up his mind that his wife should join him there and decided to ask her to do so. On the 22nd July he addressed her one of those many tender epistles, which he was so fond of writing. Delighted to have found in Josephine's correspondence some traces of jealous coquetry, he replied to her on this subject :

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‘. . . I am distressed that you should think, my dearest, that any others besides yourself could have a place in my heart ; it belongs to you by right of conquest and that conquest will prove complete and enduring.’

Alas, what is there in this world which endures, especially in the case of such attachments as these, destined by the force of circumstances to be comparatively short lived. We can only concur in M. Aubenas’ comment on this paragraph in Napoleon’s letter. ‘What would this fond lover, still inspired by the generous ardour of his youthful enthusiasm, have said, if he had been told that one day he would sacrifice his so dearly loved spouse to pitiless reasons of state !’

On the 28th July Bonaparte, whom Josephine had come to rejoin at Brescia, had to leave his wife in great haste and to press forward with the object of destroying the different divisions of Würmser’s army, the latter having committed the imprudence of disposing them at too great distances from each other. Bonaparte had first advanced on Peschiera, but had soon to retreat towards Castel-Nuovo. Uneasy as to Josephine’s safety, which was endangered by the imminence of a serious engagement, General Bonaparte would have wished to place her out of harm’s way by letting her retrace her steps, but all the roads giving egress from the town were closed, and, retreat being thus cut off, he had to give up all attempts of this nature. Then, it seems, poor Josephine burst into tears, in her agitation at these impending dangers, and her husband, moved by her weeping, uttered the

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prophetic words, 'Würmser shall pay dearly for the tears he is causing you to shed !'

Instead of betaking herself to the plains of northern Italy, away from the zone of danger where so much fighting was going on, Josephine on her husband's advice took the road to central Italy.

We learn in this connection from the *Mémorial* that the future empress had to skirt Mantua very closely while the siege was still in progress ; she was fired upon from the town and one of her suite was even hit.* Finally she succeeded in crossing the Pô, and, proceeding by Ferrara and Bologna, reached Lucca, where the senate of the city gave her a formal reception.

During this period General Bonaparte was achieving fresh victories and by a series of brilliant engagements and clever manœuvres was dispersing or annihilating in succession the different divisions of Würmser's army.

Upon his return as victor to Brescia on the 19th of August, Bonaparte hastened to write to his wife, who thanks to the triumph of the French army, had managed to get back to Milan. His letter ran as follows :

'I have just arrived, my beloved, and my first thought is to write to you. Your welfare and your image have been continually in my mind during the whole of my journey and I shall not be at ease till I have received letters from you. I am impatiently awaiting news. You cannot conceive how very anxious I am. I left you sad, vexed and half-ill. If the deepest and tenderest love could make you happy, you ought to be so. . . I am overwhelmed with business.

* *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène.*

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Adieu, my sweet Josephine ; take good care of yourself, love me and think often, often, about me.'

Leaving sufficient troops and guns before Mantua to carry on the siege, Bonaparte hastened to rejoin his wife at Milan and stayed for about a fortnight in her company. A sort of court was soon formed round Josephine and her husband in the beautiful Serbelloni Palace, which was placed by its owner at the disposal of the conqueror of the Austrians. It was here that Josephine formed a friendship for Louis Bonaparte, her husband's young brother, who on his part always showed her more goodwill than did the other members of Napoleon's family.

As conqueror of Italy, General Bonaparte now displayed an extraordinary energy and talents of the highest order. The Directoire, suspicious and jealous as they were, recognised in him an unrivalled military leader and an organiser and administrator second to none. It required genius for such a young man to succeed in enforcing his counsels and his will on such a host of generals all jealous of his renown, and in commanding from strangers a proper respect for his authority and his person. As her husband's consort, Josephine from this moment played to perfection the special rôle which was incumbent on her. Her charm, her amiability and her native shrewdness, combined with the magnetism of her supreme *savoir-vivre*, obtained the most flattering demonstrations of deference and sympathy for her from Italians of all ranks. That this was the case is shown also by the following note written by Josephine to our old

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acquaintance, Mme. de Renaudin, her aunt, who had at last become Marquise de Beauharnais :

‘M. Serbelloni will tell you, my dear aunt, how I have been received in Italy, fêted everywhere I went ; all the Italian princes are giving entertainments in my honour, even the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the emperor’s brother. Well, I really prefer to be a nobody in France. I do not care for the honours of this country. . . . If happiness be the source of health, I ought to be healthy. I have the most considerate husband in the world. I have no time to feel the want of anything. My wishes are his. He worships me all day as if I were a divinity ; no one could be a better husband. . . .’

Such were already Josephine’s feelings towards her second husband. The genuine passion which he felt for her, the assiduity with which he cared for her welfare, formed a somewhat remarkable contrast with the characteristics of her first husband Alexander de Beauharnais, at the commencement of their wedded life. In the matter of love, however, the balance is never even ; there is always one who loves more than the other. The one who loved most at this period was Napoleon ; later on it was Josephine, who suffered doubly when she saw herself abandoned.

It is not within the scope of this work to retrace the history of the marvellous campaign of 1796 in Italy, nor to enumerate the brilliant victories which Napoleon gained there. We shall confine ourselves to recalling the fact that Field-Marshal Alvinzi opposed him with no better success than Würmser, and that the

final rout of the Austrian armies was completed by the victories of Arcola and Rivoli, followed by the capture of Mantua. The preliminaries of peace were signed at Leoben on the 18th of April 1797, and were afterwards confirmed by the treaty of Campo Formio. 'At this happy period,' writes Marmont, 'Napoleon had a charm of manner which none could fail to recognise; his feelings were very quickly stirred by true sentiment, he possessed a kindly and grateful disposition and, one might even say, a warm and sensitive heart.'

During the three months which preceded the conclusion of peace Josephine had held a sort of court at Mombello. Those of her contemporaries who formed her *entourage* pay a unanimous tribute to the sovereign charm which she exercised at this period over every one, and especially over the foreign notabilities who were empowered to negotiate the terms of the final agreement with General Bonaparte.* Mme. Bonaparte before her return to France visited the principal towns of Italy. She was fêted everywhere during her peregrinations, and was the recipient of lavish attentions and homage. Venice, Genoa, and even Rome at this time received the future Empress, the future Queen of Italy, within their walls.

* 'All that savours of intellect, ambition, intrigue, enthusiasm in Italy here crowds together and mixes with the French civil and military chiefs. The diplomatists of the Republic come here to receive their instructions and to seek favour. Everything in this palace of fortune speaks of the new day that is dawning, and of the future.' *L'Europe et la Révolution*, by Albert Sorel, Vol. v, p. 176.

CHAPTER V

ON their return to Paris General Bonaparte and his wife received an enthusiastic welcome from all classes of the population. The municipal council of Paris, in recognition of the popularity enjoyed by the brilliant hero of the Italian campaign, changed the name of the Rue Chantereine where Josephine lived into that of Rue de la Victoire. In spite of the retired life which General Bonaparte led with the object of not arousing the jealousy of the Directoire, a long series of festivities was nevertheless given in his honour. Neither the members of this ephemeral government themselves nor the representatives of the legislature dared to abstain from offering him a succession of fêtes and banquets. To crown all the *Institut de France* opened its doors to him, a mark of respect which flattered the young general's vanity more than any other honour could have done.

Talleyrand, always an adroit worshipper of the rising sun, gave a fête at the Hotel Galiffet, the magnificence of which has become a matter of history. The former bishop of Autun had become minister of foreign affairs. Already divining their impending great-

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ness, this accomplished courtier lavished on Napoleon and Josephine a profusion of flowers, and paid them an assiduous court seasoned with the most delicate flattery, under the spell of which Napoleon remained to a certain extent during the whole course of his extraordinary career. Josephine on the contrary conceived an instinctive dislike for Talleyrand from the first and was never deceived by the interested adulation of this political chameleon.

One of the guests at the fête given by Talleyrand, Stanislas de Girardin, has recorded in his *Souvenirs* a remark he made on this occasion with reference to Josephine, which, had it been made in her hearing, would probably have afforded her pleasure not unmingled with vexation. The sight of Napoleon's wife suggested to M. Girardin the following reflection :

‘Madame Bonaparte is no longer pretty ; she is nearly forty years of age and looks it. She has still a graceful figure and a kind heart which will never grow old.’ And yet some women are more beautiful in their maturity than in their youth ; was M. de Girardin's admiration reserved, perhaps, for young women only ? In any case his testimony, like that of so many others, is entirely favourable to Josephine's kindness of heart.

It was in the course of this same evening that the conversation, recorded by Arnault, took place between Bonaparte and Mme. de Staël, who was amazed to hear her interlocutor affirm that a woman's merit was to be gauged by the number of her children. Necker's

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illustrious daughter could not understand that such a sally was only made with intent to discourage any advances on her part. Mme. de Staël was not the type of woman who could be an ideal to the man who prized above all virtues in the opposite sex those of grace, charm, sweetness and modesty.

Josephine was always inordinately fond of dress and luxury. She had no head for figures and her well-known extravagance, for which she has rightly been blamed, manifested itself even in the earlier stages of her career. From Milan she had already, it seems, sent orders to Paris to have the house in the Rue Chantierine, or rather in the Rue de la Victoire, which Talma had sold to her, furnished with the very best of everything.

Soon there assembled in this charming residence, which has now vanished, a sort of literary coterie, of which the principal *habitués* were, according to M. Arnault, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, the famous author of *Paul et Virginie*, the poet Ducis, Legouvé and Lemercier, the musician Méhul, the great painter David, Talma, Bouilly, Collin d'Harleville, Andrieux, Baour-Lormian and Parceval-Grandmaison.* Joseph Chénier, Picard, Alexandre Duval and even several men of science also sought Mme. Bonaparte's society.

Josephine often entertained all these celebrities at dinner, together with those generals who were most intimate with her husband, and his aide-de-camps. General Bonaparte's popularity was so great that he

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*.

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could not show himself in public without at once becoming the object of the people's acclamations. These six months spent by Josephine in the Rue de la Victoire between her return from Italy and the Egyptian expedition may be looked upon as one of the happiest periods of her life.

Bouilly, one of the guests who frequented the Rue de la Victoire, remarks, in his *Souvenirs et Récapitulations*, in speaking of Josephine : 'There she was surrounded by all those who were seeking to gain power, although they already belonged to the highest ranks of society. Her natural grace and never failing kindness of heart imparted an additional lustre to the lofty position she was attaining in the world and seemed daily to reach a still higher degree of perfection. I had the honour of being admitted to the gatherings which took place every Thursday at her house. The tone of refinement and exquisite politeness, which I had met with in the salons of 1788, no longer prevailed, but one still found in Josephine's gatherings some precious remains of those perfect models of courtesy and good taste.'* As regards feminine society, one met in Mme. Bonaparte's drawing-room Mmes. d'Houdetot, Caffarelli, Damas, Andréossy, and those two beautiful women, Mme. Tallien and Mme. Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angély ; while, as was only natural, Mme. Fanny de Beauharnais, the aunt of Josephine's first husband, was one of her most frequent visitors.

* Bouilly, *Souvenirs et Récapitulations*.

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Meantime General Bonaparte's fiery and adventurous spirit was impatient at the prolonged inaction, and chafed at a period of idleness which had already lasted three months. He now conceived the plan of an expedition to Egypt. The Directoire gave their cordial approval ; they gladly seized the opportunity of sending out of the country for as long a time as possible a military chief whose brilliant reputation disturbed a government resting on such insecure foundations. This expedition was to be at once a military and a scientific one. General Bonaparte himself carried on the recruiting amongst the generals, officers, scientific and literary men and artists of his acquaintance, and all were eager to be chosen. 'The government,' writes M. Aubenas, 'seemed to have been transferred to the Rue de la Victoire. The preparations for the campaign were carried out as though a pleasure trip were in view, and towards the close, when they took place in the general's own house, it seemed more like a family jaunt than anything else. His young brother Louis wanted to go ; Eugène had obtained the same favour, and Mme. Bonaparte, now inured to the hardships of war, determined to follow her husband. She was so insistent that the general had to appear to give his consent.'*

It was just at this time, in April 1798, that Josephine gave her niece, Mlle. Emilie de Beauharnais, in marriage to Lavalette, her husband's aide-de-camp. Less than twenty years later this courageous woman succeeded by her devotion in

* Aubenas, Vol. ii.

saving her husband's life, when he was condemned to death by the tribunals of the Restoration.

The departure of General Bonaparte and his suite for Toulon took place on 3rd May 1798, and Marmont, who accompanied him, relates how, at Roquevaire, in the middle of the night, Napoleon and his wife only escaped by a lucky chance from being hurled with their carriage down a precipice. After relating this incident in his *Mémoires*, the Duke of Ragusa adds:—‘Is not the hand of Providence manifest here?’*

On his arrival at Toulon Bonaparte told his wife that he could not take her with him to Egypt. Had he come to a different decision Napoleon would have saved himself much jealous anxiety and many rankling suspicions. To lessen the vexation Josephine felt at the separation from her husband, he was obliged to promise her that she might come and rejoin him in Egypt in a few months. He also advised her to try the waters at Plombières, in the hope that they might prove efficacious in overcoming her sterility. In obedience to this suggestion Mme. Bonaparte left almost immediately for Plombières, accompanied by Mmes. de Crigny, Cambis and Denon. It was here that a serious accident, the fall of a balcony on which Josephine and her companions were leaning, nearly proved fatal to the future empress. One of the ladies of her suite had her leg broken, and Josephine was so bruised by the fall that for several days it was thought she would

* *Mémoires du Maréchal Marmont.*

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not recover. Her daughter Hortense was summoned in haste to her mother's bed-side and, thanks to her devotion and clever nursing, Josephine soon recovered her health.

In the month of April 1799, in accordance with the wishes of her husband, who had begged her to purchase a country seat, Josephine decided to buy the small château of Malmaison.* She hastened to take possession of it and commenced a series of improvements which rendered this charming residence more lovely every day. She had only been able to receive news at long intervals from her son Eugène and from General Bonaparte on account of the English cruisers, which chased the French vessels and intercepted the communications between France and Egypt. She was also a prey to continual alarms. Always warm-hearted and generous, she was ever trying to do acts of kindness to her neighbours, and the first period of her residence at Malmaison furnishes a fresh proof of this. The revolution which had made so much havoc and destroyed or scattered so many family relationships, continued, though its leaders had gradually become wiser, its persecution of the clergy. It had secularized the nuns, closed the convents, dispersed the sisterhoods, sold their property, and liquidated their life-pensions. By a decree of Pluviôse (1799) the Government had even forbidden the former sisterhoods to meet for purposes of instruction. One of these sisters, the *citoyenne* Damour, now

* La Malmaison was bought from a Mons. Lecoulteux de Canteleu for 160,000 francs.

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thought of enlisting on their behalf the powerful protection and credit of Mme. Bonaparte, who did not hesitate to constitute herself the protectress and safeguard of these former Sisters of the Cross. A letter, signed by Josephine and preserved in the archives of the Versailles *Préfecture*, testifies to this. This letter is dated 23rd June 1799, and is addressed to the municipality of Marly. It runs as follows :

‘La Malmaison, near Rueil,
5 Messidor, year vii of the Republic.

The wife of General Bonaparte to the administrators of the Canton of Marly :

I invoke with confidence, citizens and administrators, your generosity in favour of the *citoyennes* Damour, who will endeavour to show themselves worthy of it by teaching patriotism and themselves giving an example of it, at the same time submitting themselves unreservedly to the laws of the Republic.

With assurances of my sincere regard, I remain,
(signed) LAPAGERIE-BONAPARTE.’

In the course of the period which elapsed during the memorable Egyptian campaign, Josephine may perhaps have given some excuse for ill-natured criticism by too free a manner or by some frivolities of conduct. It is difficult, at this distance of time, to pronounce judgment on the more or less serious indiscretions with which Napoleon’s wife has been charged. In such matters presumptive evidence only is available and absolute proofs are always wanting. It is not in our province to pass an opinion in this matter, either

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to plead the immaculate innocence of General Bonaparte's wife, or, still less, to condemn her ; either view of the case could at all events only be based on pure conjecture. In any case some ill-natured reports, emanating from certain members of the Bonaparte family or from former enemies of the Beauharnais party, were transmitted to Egypt to the person principally concerned. These defamatory statements, whether with or without foundation, had not failed, as may easily be imagined, greatly to perturb Bonaparte's mind. From a passage in Prince Eugène's memoirs, which it may be interesting to quote, the reader will understand to what an extent Napoleon's thoughts were engrossed by this matter: 'At this period,' writes Josephine's son, 'the Commander-in-chief was harassed by matters which caused him great annoyance, one source of vexation being the discontent which was rife in one section of the army and especially among certain generals, and another the news he received from France, where efforts were being made to mar his domestic happiness. Although I was still very young, he trusted me enough to confide his grief to me. It was generally in the evening that he took me into his confidence and spoke of his troubles, pacing all the time up and down his tent. I was the only one to whom he could unbosom himself with freedom. I endeavoured to soften his resentment and consoled him to the best of my ability and as far as my age and the respect I entertained for him allowed of my doing so.'

When allusion is made to Josephine's infidelities, whether real or assumed, it is always the common-

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place, insignificant and somewhat enigmatic name of a M. Charles which is put forward, and Mme. Bonaparte's detractors have been unable to mention any other name. This curious personality seems to be a legendary rather than a real character ; he is often spoken of, but is only seen so to speak through a misty haze. What the pamphleteers have been able to discover, and it is they who are chiefly concerned in throwing light on his personality, has not even been sufficient to satisfy the curiosity of the readers to whom his name has been thrown as a sop. This obscure and imperfectly known individual traverses the stage, in the history of Napoleon's first wife, like a fantastic apparition of vague and undefined shape ; a spectre which Josephine's enemies continually exhibited to Napoleon's gaze, just as the fomenters of anarchy, to excite the fury of the masses, take pains to display the spectre of clericalism, a shadowy phantom often brought forward, though it would be difficult exactly to explain its nature. M. Charles' personality is an unknown quantity, and the veil which envelops it is only partially removed by a letter addressed by Eugène de Beauharnais to his mother. One can well understand that this dutiful and affectionate son refused to give credit to the ill-natured tales which had been industriously disseminated till they reached his father-in-law's ears in Egypt, and aroused, as it was intended they should, his anger and jealousy. Bonaparte's anxiety and violent irritation on hearing these malicious reports seem also to shew, contrary to certain suggestions, as improbable as they are gratuitous,

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that he was far from being a complaisant husband, ready to shut his eyes to the supposed misconduct of his wife. All that history tells us of Napoleon's character and temperament, of his strong sense of honour and his indomitable pride, is in direct contradiction with the apathy and indulgent indifference attributed to him in such matters, an indifference as incomprehensible as it would be extraordinary on the part of a man of such an energetic and peremptory nature.

Napoleon's observant eye watched intently the conduct and bearing of all who were not indifferent to him, while an active and often too zealous police kept him continually informed even of the most unimportant details. His jealousy, from the beginning of his union with Josephine, was always on the alert, and one asks how he could possibly have been without suspicion of what, as it was averred, every one around him knew for a fact. Why and with what object should he have defended a wife notorious for her infidelity, older than himself and who was making him an object of ridicule, against the envious animosity of the whole Bonaparte family? Why should he have placed her on the throne and crowned her with his own hands, when it would have been so easy for him to obtain a separation? In spite of the most ingeniously framed arguments such an unlikely supposition is indeed quite inadmissible; various estimates may be formed of Napoleon's character, but it is impossible to think of him in the rôle of *Georges Dandin*!

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Bonaparte, on his return from Egypt, only entered Paris on the 16th of October 1799. The records of the period speak of a very painful conjugal scene which took place on his arrival at the mansion in the Rue de la Victoire. M. de Saint-Amand, in one of the books which he has devoted to the Empress Josephine, describes the dramatic incident which is said to have followed the reunion of husband and wife. Bonaparte had shut himself up in his room, and Josephine, who had been absent at the moment of her husband's arrival, entreated him in vain to open the door. Part of the night was spent in this disconsolate manner, and she continued knocking incessantly at the door which was kept obstinately shut. Her husband remaining deaf to her lamentations, Josephine bethought herself of calling her children, who joined their prayers to hers. After a long and painful suspense and some dramatic parleying, the door was at last opened and General Bonaparte, forgiving poor Josephine for his fancied or real wrongs, took her once more to his arms.

On the 18th Brumaire, three weeks after the arrival of the victor of the battle of the Pyramids, Napoleon became ruler of France and first magistrate of the Republic.

One can easily understand that in the course of her chequered career Josephine had many a hard struggle ; first against the Bonaparte family, jealous of her influence, then against a host of other adversaries, who, taking her sterility as their theme, harped upon the danger in which the State would be placed, if Napoleon

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had no children. Many women, younger and more beautiful than herself, excited more than once her apprehensions and her jealousy. M. de Saint-Amand is therefore right in saying that, everything being considered, Josephine must have been possessed of great shrewdness, prudence, and tact to have succeeded for so long in resisting the various schemes set on foot to effect her ruin. 'She was destined,' says the same writer, 'to win the game in 1804, when she was crowned as empress by her husband, and to lose it in 1809, though she retained her title and rank even after her divorce.' It may further be affirmed that rarely has a fallen sovereign been treated with such great consideration and such profound respect, as fell to the share of the Empress Josephine.

CHAPTER VI

JOSEPHINE, as we have seen, had been on the point of being abandoned by her second husband as well as by her first. In these critical circumstances however she had shewn herself so gentle, so clever and so fascinating that she triumphantly avoided all the pitfalls that had been laid in her path. She professed for Napoleon on every occasion the most absolute submissiveness, obedience, and devotion, while he on his part never ceased to love her tenderly, in spite of certain lapses from conjugal fidelity. Napoleon's first wife without being actually beautiful, had an indescribable charm. She possessed that grace, more beautiful than beauty itself, of which all her contemporaries have felt the ascendancy. Of even temperament, gifted with perfect tact, always kindly and extremely warm-hearted, Josephine must even have disarmed those whose interest it was to do her a bad turn. After the scene we have just related, Napoleon had taken Josephine back into his affections and his confidence. Henceforward their union was re-established on a firm and durable basis until the day of their divorce, a divorce necessitated solely by political considerations.



JOSEPHINE AT MALMAISON.

1798.

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Immediately after the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire General Bonaparte assumed the title of First Consul of the Republic, and took up his residence with his consort at the Petit Luxemburg. 'There,' writes Mons. Aubenas, 'commenced for Josephine that public homage which she enjoyed uninterruptedly till the day of her death.' At the Luxemburg the appellation *Madame*, when addressing ladies, which had only recently been abolished, was again used; shortly afterwards, at the Tuileries, Josephine was announced as : *Madame, wife of the First Consul!*

The constitution of year VIII had been promulgated. The First Consul received a salary of 500,000 francs; the second and third Consuls, Cambacérès and Lebrun, 150,000 francs each. A short time afterwards, in February 1800, the first Consul proceeded in great state to the palace of the Tuileries, where he was henceforth to take up his residence. On his arrival he held a review of the army of Paris, which Josephine witnessed from a window of the palace; on this occasion, writes Madame d'Abrantès in her *Mémoires*, she was looking extremely beautiful. Napoleon established himself in the apartments formerly occupied by the royal family; Josephine and her children occupied the rooms below, on the ground floor of the palace. The Duchess d'Abrantès has described as follows the furniture of the family drawing-room occupied by the First Consul and Josephine. 'The great reception-room was hung with yellow *quinze-seize* tapestry. The furniture was of mahogany covered with Indian silk, with a silk fringe.

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There was no gilding anywhere : the other apartments were equally devoid of richness in their decoration ; everything was fresh and tasteful but nothing more. Indeed Madame Bonaparte's apartments were only intended for private gatherings and for her morning visitors ; the great receptions took place upstairs.' *

Accustomed for long, in fact since her childhood, to the best society, Josephine was an excellent hostess and understood perfectly the art of adapting her conversation to suit the varied interests or views of her guests, so as neither to offend nor to discourage any one. From this period onward a certain number of notabilities of the old régime, amongst others the Prince of Poix, visited the wife of the First Consul. Josephine, never of a thankless disposition, had retained a deep feeling of gratitude towards Madame Tallien, who had had a great share in saving her life, as well as that of many others of her companions in captivity, by helping to bring about Robespierre's fall. Unfortunately the First Consul was so deeply prejudiced against '*Notre-Dame-de-Thermidor*' that he would never permit his wife to receive her at the Tuileries. Josephine was obliged to see Madame Tallien only in secret.

As the First Consul insensibly acquired the airs of a sovereign, he lost no opportunity of gradually surrounding himself with an ever increasing pomp and ceremony. All autocratic rulers find it a necessity to maintain their dignity by a kind of court. The

* *Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantès.*

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old royalist society, partly dispersed by the storms of the revolution, had not yet rallied or had adopted a sullen attitude towards the new régime. At the receptions of the First Consul and Madame Bonaparte it was, at first at any rate, the military element which naturally predominated. There were also a few financiers, several literary men, and some insignificant remnants of the old régime, besides of course the foreign *corps diplomatique*, which was necessarily much reduced in numbers, seeing that the French Republic was still on unfriendly terms with half the sovereigns of Europe. The *corps diplomatique* was composed at this period of the envoys of Prussia, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Baden and Hesse-Cassel, and lastly of those representing the daughter—or sister—republics of the one just established in France, namely, the small Cisalpine, Batavian, Helvetic and Ligurian republics.

With the assistance of the valuable advice of Mme. de Montesson, themorganatic wife of the Duke of Orleans, grandfather of King Louis-Philippe, Napoleon and his wife, as soon as they had taken possession of the Tuileries, devoted themselves to the task of forming the new court. Mme. de Montesson, a woman of great ability and refinement, possessed large experience in all these worldly matters, and placed this experience cordially at the disposal of the First Consul and Madame Bonaparte. They on their side repaid her services by always evincing for her the greatest consideration and attention. In particular Napoleon

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restored to Mme. de Montesson a very large pension which she had lost in the Revolution. As widow of the Duke of Orleans she also owned a very beautiful and luxurious residence at Romainville.

It required much tact and shrewdness to turn to favourable account such a mixture of incongruous elements, to flatter the vanity of some without wounding the susceptibility of others. In carrying out this work of amalgamation, as Napoleon said himself later on at St Helena, Josephine's co-operation was of the greatest service to him. The *Mémorial* alludes to this in the following terms: 'The circumstance of my marriage to Madame de Beauharnais,' said the emperor to his confidant, 'placed me in contact with a whole party which was indispensable to me in carrying out my system of fusion.'

Josephine indeed did her utmost to further her husband's aims. No one could have played so well the rôle which was assigned to her, a rôle political as well as social, and one suited to her tastes, her abilities, and all her past training. Refined, graceful, and kindhearted, she was gifted with all the qualities which many a sovereign might have coveted, and it was not long before she saw her efforts crowned with the most complete success. When she became empress she remained for the people *The good Josephine*, a name that has been justly awarded her, for, affable and generous to everyone, she possessed in a superlative degree the passion for helping others and doing good. 'If I win battles,' said Napoleon to Josephine, 'you win hearts!'

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Even before the year 1802 the household of the First Consul and Josephine had assumed the character of a petty court, which, although in the meantime only of modest dimensions, contained as it were the germ of the elaborate and brilliant court maintained by the emperor at a later date. An eye-witness of the Consular period has described it in the following terms : *

‘The First Consul no longer kept an open table ; he dined with Madame Bonaparte and some members of his family. On Wednesdays, which were the council days, he retained to dinner the Consuls and the ministers. † He lunched alone.

‘There was a governor of the Palace, the office being filled by General Duroc. This official had under his care the regulation of the expenses, the police and the supervision of the palace. He had to entertain the officers and ladies-in-waiting and the aides-de-camp. The military household was at this time composed of four generals in command of the Consular guard : Generals Lannes, Bessières, Davout and Soult ; eight aides-de-camp : Colonels Le Marois, Caffarelli, Lauriston, Caulaincourt, Savary, Rapp, and Fontanelli, the last mentioned an Italian officer, and Captain Lebrun, a son of the third Consul. There were four prefects of the palace : M. de Luçay,

* Ménéval, *Mémoires*, vol. i, pp. 132 and 133. (Published by Dentu, 1894.)

† The eight ministers in office at the commencement of the Consulate were : Talleyrand, Fouché, Gaudin, Berthier, Decrès, Chaptel, Abrial and Barbé-Marbois, and later came Régnier and Fortalis.

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Rémusat, Didelot and Cramayel ; and four ladies : Mmes. de Luçay, Talhouët, Rémusat and Lauriston. One of the generals of the guard, as well as an aide-de-camp and a prefect of the palace, were in attendance on the First Consul every week by turns.

‘The prefects of the palace were charged with the internal arrangements, the regulation of matters of etiquette, and the superintendence of the theatres. The ladies were required to accompany Mme. Bonaparte ; the wives of the foreign ambassadors and others were presented by them. One lady was in attendance every week on Mme. Bonaparte. At all ceremonies and on all extraordinary occasions all the ladies and prefects of the palace were present.

‘The general of the guard in attendance presided at dinner with the officers who were on duty at the palace.

‘There were thus already all the elements of a Court in the First Consul’s household.’

With the exception of these modifications in the Court etiquette, which were necessitated by the increased importance and dignity awarded to his office, Napoleon’s private life remained almost the same as before. Between ten and eleven o’clock at night, while Josephine was still engaged in conversation or in playing cards, a message was brought to her that the First Consul had retired to rest. She then wished her company good-night and proceeded to rejoin her husband. When Josephine found him still awake, she seated herself at the foot of his bed and commenced

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reading to him. As she read very well he listened with great pleasure.

‘At Malmaison,’ writes Napoleon’s confidential secretary, ‘the First Consul spent in the park the moments which were not employed in his study, and there too his time was not wasted.

‘Josephine on her part employed her leisure as she thought proper. She received numerous visits during the course of the day; lunch was taken with a few intimate friends or old acquaintances, or with those of more recent date. Josephine possessed no accomplishments, did not draw and was not musical. There was a harp in her apartment, on which she played to while away the time and she always played the same air. She did some tapestry work, and was therein assisted by her ladies-in-waiting and her callers. In this way she had worked the coverings for her drawing-room furniture at Malmaison. This diligence pleased Napoleon.’*

But what was less pleasing to the husband of the good Empress Josephine was her habitual extravagance. For her the words ‘economical’ and ‘economy’ were terms without meaning. According to Michaud’s *Biographie* Josephine had at one time debts amounting to 1,200,000 francs, only the half of which she dared to acknowledge to Napoleon. The same author speaks of her having bought thirty-eight new hats in one month! This thoughtless waste resulted in a state of permanent confusion in Josephine’s household, and elicited from Napoleon, who was a lover of order and

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. i.

economy, continual and far from undeserved expressions of his disapproval.*

‘Josephine,’ says Madame Ducrest in her *Mémoires*, ‘wanted every one to be happy wherever she went. Every kind of misfortune or suffering appealed to her sympathy, to whatever party the sufferer belonged. As a result of her inexhaustible generosity combined with her expensive tastes, her finances were always involved. It was especially owing to her good offices that the exiles from France had their names struck off the list, and their property restored, and that they received pensions and assistance. Josephine could never turn a deaf ear to appeals for help.’

In describing the wife of the First Consul, after their occupation of the Tuileries, M. Aubenas writes further: ‘She succeeded superlatively in pleasing because one felt she loved to please, and this was her ambition not from calculating motives but from her natural disposition. In her relations with others she exhibited more benevolence than she exacted. Ingratitude did not discourage her. The secret jealousies, the petty basenesses exhibited towards her as the result of her increasing greatness neither disturbed nor embittered her. During her whole life her

* Napoleon had never at any time been able to acquiesce in Josephine’s extravagance nor in the facility with which she contracted debts. Josephine had for long had Bourrienne as an accomplice in concealing them from him, but an unacknowledged debt existed none the less, and in spite of all attempts at reformation Josephine remained incorrigible. She could resist no temptations to buy, whether it were a shawl, a bit of jewellery, a picture or a piece of plate that took her fancy. This prodigality had no limits, in spite of Napoleon’s reproofs and remonstrances. (Savine. *Les Tours de la Malmaison*.)

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only means of defence was an ever growing sweetness and affability : in a word she was imperturbably good natured. This was her weapon against her enemies, her charm for her friends, her power over her husband. No other woman, moreover, possessed to such a degree as she the talent for entertaining and for saying to her guests, without fatuity, what they were each most anxious to hear. Quick to grasp the relative importance of her position with each advance she made in the social scale, her demeanour increased in dignity with her rank ; but underlying these subtle shades of difference in her bearing was always the same foundation of gracious benevolence, for, while she was never inferior to her position, she constantly showed herself superior to her fortune, which she bore with ease and simplicity.’*

In this second volume of his history of the Empress Josephine M. Aubenas has given us some other interesting details as to her private manner of life with Napoleon.

‘The First Consul devoted to his wife every moment which he could spare from business ; often indeed he came down before dinner to her dressing room, fingered all her belongings, putting everything into disorder, and teased her affectionately on the different ways she arranged her hair and her choice of gowns, matters in which Josephine had certainly nothing to learn from her husband.’

‘Madame Bonaparte, who understood to perfection the art of dressing well,’ says Mme. d’Abrantès,

* Aubenas, vol. ii, pp. 117, 118.

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when speaking, in her *Mémoires*, of these early times, 'gave the example of the extremest elegance. . . . Her toilet was one of the employments of her life, of much greater importance to her than those which concerned her more material wants. She could not have existed if she had not, every morning, performed the rites of the *three toilettes*. This occupation, however, it must be granted, was quite a legitimate one for the consort of the highest authority of the realm.'

Josephine's example was followed, and this gave an impetus to trade and manufactures, the prosperity of which the First Consul was endeavouring to promote.

CHAPTER VII

THE necessity of mentioning the foregoing details regarding the organisation of the Consular Court and Josephine's manner of life has prevented us so far from giving a general account of the principal events which marked the period between Napoleon's elevation to the dignity of First Consul and the year 1802. The war with Austria had indeed soon absorbed all General Bonaparte's attention and vigilance. The preliminaries of a peace advantageous for Austria had been signed at Paris on the 28th July 1800, but as they were not ratified by the Emperor of Germany hostilities between France and Austria had recommenced. Victory once more attended the arms of France and the defeat of the Austrians by Moreau at the battle of Hohenlinden, after their rout at Marengo by the army of Italy, induced the cabinet of Vienna to negotiate. Conferences were held at Lunéville between Joseph Bonaparte, representing the French Government, and Count Cobenzl, plenipotentiary of Austria, and on the 9th February 1801 the final treaty of peace was signed.

During a brief interruption in these negotiations the Duchess of Guiche, an emissary of the Count of Artois

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and the Royalist party, had arrived in Paris. This beautiful woman was entrusted with the task of enlisting Josephine's support, and she easily discovered the points where their sympathies were in accord. Mme. de Guiche was invited to lunch at Malmaison, an opportunity which she considered very favourable for sounding the inclinations of her hosts. The fascinating envoy exercised all her charms in pleading the cause of the Bourbon princes, and gave her hearers to understand that the gratitude of the brothers of Louis XVI would be profound, worthy in fact of the hero who would become the object of it. Josephine, whose associations had always been royalist, cherished perhaps secret leanings towards such a consummation ;* but this was not the case with the First Consul, who lost no time in having orders conveyed to the Duchess the same evening that she must quit French territory.

The royalist party, always deluding themselves with vain hopes, had counted on General Bonaparte's assistance in re-establishing the monarchy in the interest of the house of Bourbon. The First Consul's flat and categorical refusals to lend himself to the cause of the restoration of the old *régime* must have caused them the keenest disappointment. The failure of their emissaries had therefore the effect of exasperating the most exalted chiefs of this party,

* "My dear," Napoleon is reported to have said to his wife, "you are a very good woman, but you are wanting in commonsense. . . . Just leave things to me and you and yours will be better off than by accepting what they offer you."

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and of inciting them to resort to criminal enterprises.

What they had been unable to obtain by peaceful means they would endeavour to accomplish by violent methods. On the third Nivôse, Christmas eve 1800, the opera was to give a performance of Haydn's oratorio, the *Creation*, and it was known that the family of the First Consul had decided to attend it. General Bonaparte, accompanied by Lebrun, de Lannes and de Bessières, had started in the first carriage; Madame Bonaparte, Hortense, and Madame Murat, escorted by Rapp, were to follow immediately. A providential occurrence, mentioned in Rapp's *Mémoires*, delayed Josephine's departure, so that the terrible explosion of the infernal machine in the Rue Saint-Nicaise took place just after the Consul's carriage had passed, and a few moments before the arrival of the equipage in which were seated his wife, his sister and his step-daughter. Fifteen persons killed and eighty wounded were the victims of this horrible outrage, which shook and damaged all the houses in the neighbourhood. The Consular family, after escaping by a miracle from the fate which had been designed for them, were soon assembled safe and sound in the opera house. Madame d'Abrantès gives an account in her *Mémoires*, which is worth quoting, of the impression made upon her at this dramatic moment by the appearance of the chief of the state and his family :

'My gaze,' she writes, 'was fixed all this time on the First Consul's box. He was calm and only showed

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emotion when a stir occurred amongst the audience and he heard some vehement expressions of opinion as to what had just happened. Madame Bonaparte was not so well able to control her feelings. She had a terrified look, her very attitude, always so full of grace, was unlike herself. She seemed to be shivering under her shawl, as if it were affording her protection, and it was actually this shawl which had been the cause of her safety. She was crying; however hard she tried to keep back her tears, one could see them coursing down her pale cheeks, and whenever she looked at the First Consul she shuddered afresh. Her daughter too was greatly discomposed. As to Mme. Murat, the character of the family was apparent in her demeanour; she was perfectly mistress of herself throughout this trying evening.'

Josephine remained for a long time under the impression of the terror she had experienced on her own account as well as on behalf of those dear to her, and exclaimed, referring to the numerous conspiracies which for the last six months had been embittering her existence: 'Can it be called life to pass one's time thus in fear and trembling!' The responsibility for this criminal attempt was at first assigned to the terrorists, but Fouché was soon acknowledged to be right in charging the Royalist party with it.

The year 1801 saw peace re-established not only with Austria at Lunéville, as we have mentioned, but also with Naples, Bavaria, Portugal, Turkey, and finally with Russia. The treaty of peace with England was only signed during the first months of the

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following year, but the agreement which was concluded between France and the United States preceded it by nearly a twelvemonth. These events mark the culminating point of the Consular period, so glorious an epoch in General Bonaparte's career.

The happy days at Malmaison, the charm and delights of which have been described by so many writers in their memoirs, attained during this year 1801 their greatest brilliancy. During the day the guests of the First Consul and Napoleon himself played at prisoner's base. In the evening Josephine sat down to backgammon, a game which she was very fond of and in which, it seems, she excelled, playing well and very quickly. In the evenings the aides-de-camp and the circle of acquaintance of the simple Consular Court gathered in a small theatre capable of accommodating about two hundred spectators. Eugène de Beauharnais, it is said, distinguished himself in the rôles of valet. His sister Hortense and he were the principal actors; after them came Bourrienne, Lauriston, Denon, and several ladies and officers of the household. Michot, a first rate actor and associate of the Théâtre Français, was stage manager and presided over the rehearsals. The performances were generally small society pieces; Napoleon attended regularly and derived much amusement from them. He liked to praise or criticise the acting, and his remarks, often laudatory, always shrewd, showed the interest he took in these representations. On Sundays there were small dances, at which he gave himself up entirely to the enjoyment of the

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pastime ; this patriarchal life had its attractions for him.

Fouché, minister of police, has been mentioned above in connection with the outrage of the Rue Saint-Nicaise ; if Napoleon had a liking for Talleyrand and his flattering ways, Josephine on the contrary showed a very marked preference for the future Duke of Otranto. She considered him superior to the ex-bishop in *frankness*, a singular word to use, remarks M. Aubenas, in making a comparison between the two competitors in this contest of duplicity. Josephine indeed was persuaded, and at length succeeded in persuading Napoleon, that the services of Fouché, that dangerous political scoundrel, were indispensable to their safety, and that in no circumstances could they afford to have him as an enemy. In spite of the many legitimate reasons the emperor had for complaining on more than one occasion of this despicable creature, Josephine always did her best, as far as this was possible, to restore him to her husband's good graces. Everyone knows how Fouché afterwards repaid her services ! It was, we believe, during the year 1807 that Fouché actually had the effrontery to suggest to the empress on his own initiative, and without authorisation of any kind, the advisability of a divorce ! In permitting himself this impertinence, the famous Duke of Otranto imagined he was falling in with Napoleon's secret views, and urged him to take this serious resolve with the intention of flattering him, at a time when the emperor had as yet no inclination for the step.

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The reader will remember perhaps the indignation with which Queen Hortense, in one of her letters to the Abbé Bertrand, complains of an accusation brought against her mother in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, which she considered a calumny.* In the *Mémoires de Thibaudeau* will be found the explanation of her justifiable irritation. The editor of these *Mémoires* points out in a note, in support of what is said in the text, that Thibaudeau in his unvarnished narrative has demonstrated the falseness of the allegation, repeated by M. de Las Cases, concerning Napoleon's first wife. The emperor's confidant at St Helena represents him as saying that, when Josephine had to renounce the hope of giving her husband a son, she several times suggested to him the perpetration of a great political fraud, namely that she should feign pregnancy and should adopt any child that he might choose to present her with. Now Thibaudeau, speaking of one of the last conversations he had with Josephine, expresses himself with regard to this matter in the following terms :

‘Rest assured, she said to me, that they have not renounced their project of heredity, and that sooner or later it will come about. They are determined that Bonaparte shall have a child, they do not care by whom. They would wish then to make me adopt it, because they feel that Bonaparte would do himself a wrong, if he dismissed a woman who had linked her fortunes with his at a time when he was still without power, and whose daughter he

* See Introduction, pp. 3 and 4.

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intended to give in marriage to his brother. Never, however, I have told them, will I lend myself to such an infamous act. . . .’

‘*They*’ stood for the clan of the Bonaparte family, always jealous of the Beauharnais, whom the sisters of the First Consul detested; also for Fouché, Talleyrand, and the host of intriguers who hoped to acquire honours or profit from a fresh marriage of their master. Josephine shows her fairness and discernment in not throwing the responsibility of these ideas of divorce entirely on her husband; she knew perfectly well how strongly Napoleon was urged to this course by certain influential persons of his *entourage*. Louis Bonaparte, Josephine’s young brother-in-law, had, as we have seen, always evinced for her much sympathy and regard. She on her side, grateful for his considerateness, was well disposed towards Louis, not being exactly spoiled by the rest of the family. She therefore considered she was acting in his interest as well as in that of her daughter Hortense in endeavouring to arrange a marriage between Mlle. de Beauharnais and Napoleon’s brother. Josephine succeeded in her efforts after some resistance on the side of the parties concerned, who had a sort of presentiment that they were contracting an ill-assorted union. The wedding took place in the first days of 1802, and Cardinal Caprara, who happened to be in Paris, pronounced his nuptial benediction on the young couple at their request in the drawing-room of the house in the Rue de la Victoire where they were going

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to take up their abode, seeing that the churches had not yet been re-opened. During the course of the same year, on the 18th Thermidor (6th August), General Bonaparte was proclaimed Consul for life.

Josephine, as the reader now knows, had misgivings for the future, and, unambitious herself by nature, she dreaded so much greatness for her husband. The Bonapartes on the contrary, possessed of an insatiable greed for honours and dignities, would have liked to see their chief mount more rapidly still the steps leading to supreme power. At the Tuileries and in official circles the only subject of conversation was heredity and dynasty, with a view to strengthening General Bonaparte's government. According to Thibaudeau's account again, Josephine once remarked when unbosoming herself to him :

“I do not at all approve the schemes that are on foot ; I have told Bonaparte so. He listens to me with a good deal of attention, but the flatterers soon make him change his opinion. The new concessions which will be made to him will increase the number of his enemies. The generals are exclaiming that they have not been fighting against the Bourbons in order to exchange their rule for that of the Bonaparte family. I by no means regret having no children from my husband, for I should tremble for their fate. I shall remain attached to Bonaparte's fortunes, whatever perils may attend them, as long as he retains for me the regard and the affection which he has always evinced, but the day he changes I shall retire from the Tuileries. I am quite well aware that he is being

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urged to separate from me. Lucien is giving his brother the worst advice.”

In the month of May 1802, the peace of Amiens was signed with England and was celebrated with much solemnity. After so many convulsions, wars and misfortunes, France enjoyed at length a real repose and a renewed prosperity. This period of calmness and tranquility was unfortunately not destined to be of long duration. After another stay at Plombières, Josephine went to rejoin her husband, who in the early autumn took possession of the ancient royal residence of St Cloud. Napoleon transferred thither the seat of government and announced, through Duroc, that he would hold every Sunday, at the Château of St Cloud, a grand reception preceded by Mass, a general attendance at which would be agreeable to the First Consul.*

Josephine, however, always clung to Malmaison, that first home of her second youth and of her happiness. All her efforts were devoted to rendering it more and more beautiful and to making it into a charming and attractive retreat. The re-establishment of peace with England had allowed of Josephine opening relations with some botanists and with the principal nurserymen in London. Through these channels she received rare or new plants and shrubs with which she enriched her gardens.† ‘She used to give me for translation,’

* Thibaudeau, *Mémoires*.

† *Mémoires de Mlle. George*, according to the original manuscript, by Mons. P. A. Chéramy, 1908. ‘Josephine and flowers’ :— ‘Josephine was very fond of flowers. Mlle. Raucourt also took a great interest in them. They exchanged specimens. . . . On

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writes Napoleon's second secretary in his *Mémoires*, 'letters written in English which were addressed to her on this subject. Josephine, at Malmaison, used regularly to visit her hot-houses, in which she took a great interest.'* There she felt really at home, and was not a prey to painful recollections of the unfortunate Queen Marie-Antoinette.

In the month of October 1802, Mme. Louis Bonaparte gave birth to a son, a circumstance which rejoiced Josephine's heart and gave Napoleon great satisfaction. Towards the close of this same month of October the First Consul and his wife undertook a journey to Normandy, where they received, especially at Rouen and Evreux, an enthusiastic welcome. So much was this the case that Josephine was able to write from the former place to her daughter in the following strain :

'The courier is leaving and I have only time to send you, as well as your husband and my little grandson, my warmest love. We are all well. The rejoicings at Rouen are universal, all the inhabitants have been assembled under Bonaparte's windows since his arrival, and are every moment clamouring to see him. They do not know what name to call him by to give expression to their affection ; their joy almost amounts to frenzy. I send you a song they are singing in the

one of Josephine's journeys she stopped at *la Chapelle*, (Mlle. Raucourt's residence) ; she visited the hothouse and carried off some plants. This little detail goes to prove Josephine's intimacy with Mlle. Raucourt, and the familiarity which caused her to address her by her Christian name, Fanny.'

* Ménéval, *Mémoires*, vol. i.

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streets. I have received your letter ; it has given me great pleasure. Goodbye ; they are waiting for my letter. Bonaparte and Eugène send their love, and your mother her fondest affection.

‘JOSEPHINE.’*

Thus peacefully did the year 1802 end for the mother of Eugène and Hortense, a year signalized by an important religious event, the Concordat, which reconciled the French nation with the Church.

* Didot collection, vol. ii, p. 224.

CHAPTER VIII

IN the year 1803 took place the rupture of the treaty of Amiens, from which England had not reaped the advantages she expected. This ephemeral truce in the merciless struggle between France and her eternal rivals might perhaps have modified entirely Napoleon's destiny, had a pacific tendency on the part of the British Government given it a sincere and durable character. From this moment all the genius of France's ruler was concentrated on preparations for war, his only ambition henceforth being to repay France's hereditary enemies for the evil they had always done to the only rival they feared in Europe, previous to 1870 and the fall of the Second Empire.

Josephine, distressed at the turn events had taken, had left for Plombières. From there she wrote to her daughter :

'I am intensely melancholy, my dear Hortense ; I am parted from you and my heart is sick as well as my body. I feel I was not born for so much greatness, and that I would be happier in some quiet retreat surrounded by the objects of my affection. . . .'*

* Aubenas, vol. ii, Didot collection.

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The First Consul subsequently made a tour with Josephine in the northern provinces and the Belgian departments. The welcome there accorded to them surpassed in enthusiasm the ovations they had received on their tour in Normandy. Josephine, in a less happy frame of mind than on the previous occasion, wrote to her daughter from Lille on the 9th July 1803 :*

‘I have taken the trouble, my dear Hortense, to get your brother and these ladies to write to you, to give you some news of Bonaparte and myself. Since I left Paris I have been continually occupied in receiving compliments. You know me and can judge from this whether I would not prefer a quieter life!’ . . .

After visiting Brussels, Liège, Namur, and Sedan, the First Consul returned to Paris and thence to St Cloud, his thoughts already occupied with plans for a naval expedition against England, preparations for which he commenced at once on his return by the organisation of the famous camp at Boulogne.

England, at first contemptuous, at length became uneasy at these immense preparations, and betook herself to the expedient of conspiracy, a deplorable policy, contrary to all considerations of morality, and one as to which M. Thiers has expressed his opinion with the authority that attaches to all his writings.

Josephine wrote her daughter a letter on this subject, indicating the apprehensions which were

* Aubenas, vol. ii.

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weighing on her mind, and we think it will prove interesting to reproduce it :

‘Many things have happened since you left,’ she writes. ‘The man who was sentenced to be shot and petitioned for pardon has revealed some matters of importance : there were in Paris eighty conspirators determined to assassinate Bonaparte. Savary started the day before yesterday with fifty gendarmes to arrest Georges and seventeen other individuals, who are not very far from Paris. Just fancy, Georges has been in Paris or in the neighbourhood since August ; truly it makes one shudder ! When you come I will give you all the details of this horrible plot. A number of persons have already been arrested. Do not tell any one about this, except, of course your husband.’*

It seems worth while to refer here to what was taking place at the camp at Boulogne during the interval which preceded the arrest of the majority of the conspirators concerned in this plot, a measure which was speedily carried out and which resulted in the execution of several of the guilty parties. Nothing could have been thought out with greater care, nor with more acuteness and attention to details than this gigantic enterprise against Great Britain : ‘Three hours at sea,’ said Napoleon, ‘and only a few days marching separate us from London ; I shall lead there 150,000 veterans, and we shall achieve, on the ruins of the English oligarchy, the peace of the world and the freedom of the seas.’

* Didot collection, in Aubenas.

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‘With this formidable array confronting her,’ writes M. de Colbert in his *Traditions et Souvenirs*,* ‘England was forced to concentrate her attention on a single point, and continental Europe, recognising the existence of a state of war, made no comments on these immense armaments. Bonaparte was thus ready for all eventualities.

‘This prepared war-material was scattered all along the coast from Cherburg to the island of Texel ; it was necessary to unite it at the point whence it would be easiest to cross over to England, and the union could only be effected in full view of the English cruisers. This difficulty however was surmounted ; the flotilla answered all requirements ; the whole army could find room on board, and after a little practice the embarkation and debarcation took place in an orderly manner and with remarkable rapidity. The first part of the problem seemed solved.’

That this daring and formidable scheme came to nothing was not due to the material impossibility of carrying it out, but to the incompetence of the unfortunate Admiral Villeneuve.

Although mixing but little in politics and still less in matters pertaining to war and the preparations for it, Josephine was not indifferent to the vicissitudes which befel her husband’s great enterprise. During one of Napoleon’s frequent visits to the camp of Boulogne, when she on her side had gone again to take the waters at Plombières, Josephine wrote to her

* Three volumes by the Marquis de Colbert-Chabanais ; edited by V. Havard.

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husband's private secretary* the two following notes :

‘Plombières, 19th Thermidor (Year XII)

‘I am much obliged to you my dear Meneval (*sic*) for your kind attention in giving me particulars of the emperor's arrival at Boulogne. Your note has given me the greatest pleasure. Please continue to send me such details as often as possible ; you can do nothing that will be so agreeable to me, and I shall await all news with impatience.

‘JOSEPHINE.’

‘Plombières, le 29 Thermidor

‘I take too much interest, my dear Menneval (*sic*), in the news you give me, not to beg you again to continue writing me as minutely as ever. I count upon you to keep me accurately informed as to the emperor's health, and to give me as many details as possible about all the preparations that are being made. Reports of an invasion are continually flying about ; I cherish the hope that they are without foundation † . . . still, do not hide anything from me, and rest assured that, in diminishing my anxieties, your notes will do me almost as much good as the waters.

‘JOSEPHINE.’

Previous allusion has been made to the plot against

* Letters of the Empress Josephine to Mons. de Ménéval (not published).

† A curious reflection on the empress' part ; Josephine seems inspired by the fear she had conceived in her childhood in Martinique of the frequent attempts directed by the English vessels against the French Antilles.

the First Consul's life, which Fouché had been instrumental in unearthing, and which had fortunately been frustrated before it could be carried into execution. Cadoudal and several of his accomplices paid with their lives for their criminal attempt. General Moreau was exiled to America, but many of the conspirators, amongst others the brothers Polignac, owed their pardon to Josephine's intervention. M. de Rivière as well as others owed the remission of their punishment either to the Murats or to other members of the Bonaparte family. It had been asserted at the Tuileries that the persons implicated in this plot had to await, before they could act, the arrival of a *prince*; but who could this prince be? No name had been mentioned. . . .

'One can hardly form an idea,' writes Napoleon's private secretary in his *Mémoires*, 'of the anxieties, alarms and painful insomnia to which, according to my personal observation, the First Consul was a prey during the month of January 1804, when tangled webs were being woven round him which he could neither discover nor reach, when he felt the ground tremble beneath his feet, when the very air he breathed seemed to bring him warnings of an unknown danger. But his courage remained undaunted.'*

The continual tension, however, to which he was subjected, could not but disturb Napoleon's calmness and serenity. He became gloomy, nervous, and defiant, and M. Thiers in his work, *Le Consulat et l'Empire*, attributes to him with much probability the

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. i, p. 264, *et seqq.*

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following language : “ The Bourbons think they can shed my blood like that of the lower animals. My blood, however, is as good as theirs, and I intend to make them feel the terror with which they are trying to inspire me. I forgive Moreau his weakness and the promptings of a foolish jealousy, but I shall cause the first of these princes who falls into my hands to be mercilessly shot ; I will teach them the sort of man they have to deal with.”

Alas ! adds Mons. Aubenas, in order to realise this sanguinary threat, he committed the error of stretching his hand beyond the frontiers, and of there seizing a prince, who, in spite of unfortunate appearances, was evidently not the one for whom the conspirators were waiting !

The arrest and execution of the illstarred Duke of Enghien are facts too well known for it to be necessary to refer again to all the particulars of the sad story. We shall not enlarge further on the very heavy share of responsibility which rests, with respect to this cruel deed, on Talleyrand and Fouché, those two perfidious councillors of Napoleon. We shall only speak of the profound and painful impression which the melancholy and unmerited fate of the last of the Condés made upon Josephine. Bourrienne indeed attributes to Josephine, some time after this, the remark : “ This title of empress does not dazzle me ! ” and then makes her say, in allusion to the death of the duke : “ I believe all this bodes ill for him, for my children and for myself. The wretches should be satisfied ! See to what they have driven him ! This death poisons my life.”

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Josephine, whose kind and sensitive heart had a horror of any sort of violence, was profoundly affected by this tragic and sinister calamity, all the more so that she had always maintained for the late royal family the sentiments of attachment and respect which had been inculcated in her from her childhood upwards.

It is asserted, writes M. Aubenas,* that Madame Bonaparte had thrown herself at her husband's feet to plead for the Duke of Enghien's pardon and that she had met with a refusal. 'Not only is this statement false,' adds the Duke of Rovigo in his *Mémoires*, 'but it is entirely wanting in probability.' Josephine had only forebodings, she shed tears, and since the news arrived that the prince had been arrested, was continually cross-questioning her husband, fearing, although hardly believing it as yet, that his destruction had been resolved on. The First Consul endeavoured to avoid these importunate questions and the sight of his wife's tears, afraid of their effect upon himself. 'A misunderstanding or a crime,' writes M. Aubenas again, thwarted such 'inclinations towards clemency as stirred the heart of Josephine's husband, and the day after the execution he came himself to announce to his wife, with an air that betrayed his emotion, that the Duke of Enghien had ceased to live. Mme. Bonaparte thus only learnt the news of the prince's sentence at the same time as that of his death, and she had therefore no possible opportunity of asking a favour, which she certainly would have

* Aubenas, vol. ii, pp. 228-230.

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spared no efforts to obtain, and which, her first entreaties show this conclusively, she would in all probability have been successful in obtaining.'

It is said, nevertheless, according to the testimony of several of Josephine's contemporaries, that she received this horrible news with an explosion of tears and reproaches. According to M. Aubenas, she was heard to exclaim in heartbroken tones more than once during this melancholy morning: 'Oh, who can have given him such advice? If I had only known this in time. . . . I would have averted this catastrophe!' This deplorable occurrence forms indeed a page which one would gladly efface from Napoleon's glorious history.

We shall conclude what remains to be said on this painful subject by borrowing two quotations, the first from the *Mémoires* of Prince Eugène, the second from those of Méneval, both of which bear upon the unhappy fate of the Duke of Enghien.

'Without entering on the considerations of high politics which may possibly explain such a deplorable act,' writes Prince Eugène, 'I will confine myself to saying that on going the following day to Malmaison, I learned at one and the same time the arrest, the sentence and the execution of the prince. My mother was in tears and addressed the keenest reproaches to the First Consul, who listened to her in silence. She told him that it was a shameful deed, the stain of which would cling to him for ever; that he had yielded to the treacherous counsels of those who were really his enemies and rejoiced to

be able to tarnish the history of his life by so disgraceful a page. The First Consul retired to his study and a few minutes later Caulaincourt arrived on his return from Strasburg. He was surprised at my mother's grief and she hastened to tell him the cause of it. At this fatal news Caulaincourt struck his forehead and tore his hair, exclaiming : " Oh ! why had I to be mixed up with this disastrous expedition ! " Twenty years have passed since then, and I recollect perfectly that several of the persons, who endeavour to-day to clear themselves from the imputation of having had a share in this crime, then boasted of it as something to be proud of, and strongly approved the deed. As for myself, I was very grieved, on account of the respect and attachment I felt for the First Consul ; it seemed to me that his glory had thereby suffered eclipse. Some days afterwards my mother told me she had had the satisfaction of sending to a lady, a great friend of the prince, his dog and some of his belongings.*

The following is the account given by the other eye-witness :

Malmaison presented a gloomy appearance on this day. I still remember the silence that reigned, in the evening, in Mme. Bonaparte's drawing-room. The First Consul stood leaning with his back against the mantlepice, while M. de Fontanes read something aloud to him. Mme. Bonaparte was seated at one end of a sofa looking very melancholy and with tears in her eyes ; the members of

* *Mémoires et correspondance du Prince Eugène*, vol. i, p. 90.

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the household, at that time few in number, had retired to the neighbouring gallery, and talked in a low tone on the one subject of conversation which absorbed everyone's thoughts. Some persons arrived from Paris, but stopped at the door of the salon, struck with the dismal aspect of the room. The First Consul, sombre and thoughtful, while listening attentively to M. de Fontanes' reading, seemed not to be aware of their presence. The minister of finance remained standing for a quarter of an hour in the same place, without being addressed by anyone. Unwilling to retire as he had come, he approached the First Consul and enquired if he had any orders to give; the Consul replied by a negative gesture.*

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. i.

CHAPTER IX

THE Empire was in the air. The necessity of strengthening the established order of things by rendering the First Consul's power hereditary had for long been a subject of discussion at the Tuileries. Once the hereditary principle had been sanctioned by a new monarchical constitution, conspiracies and plots would no longer, it was said, be liable to entail such grave consequences even if successful. Already there were whisperings in the immediate circle of the chief of the state as to the necessity of a divorce, Josephine being no longer able to indulge the hope of giving her husband the son whom he so ardently desired. Napoleon's sisters and his brother Lucien especially, were urging the First Consul to this decision. Fouché as well as Talleyrand took an active part in these intrigues, adapting themselves to what they guessed were Napoleon's own inclinations. Josephine, who was devoid of great ambition, was by no means anxious to wear the diadem, which had nevertheless been predicted for her by a prophecy uttered at Martinique. It is said that she exclaimed to her daughter: "We are mounting to a height

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whence the fall will be a terrible one!" Hortense shared these misgivings. The mother as well as the daughter, moreover, were imbued with royalist sentiments; to seize the crown of the ancient kingly race and place it on the head of another seemed to them an act of usurpation.

Bourrienne asserts that he was present one day at a little private scene between Josephine and Napoleon in the Consular study. Josephine, coming and seating herself on her husband's knees, said to him: "I beseech you, Bonaparte, do not make yourself king . . . it is that horrid Lucien who is urging you; do not listen to him!" To which Napoleon replied: "You are crazy, my poor Josephine; it is some of your old dowager acquaintances or your bosom friend, La Rochefoucauld, who must have been telling you these tales; just let me alone!"

The life-consulship, the proclamation of which had already awakened Josephine's anxiety, seemed only to have been the preliminary to the appropriation of the throne. The First Consul's family and entourage took a lively interest in this important change. In the Consular household it had at first been the subject of asides, and then of general conversations; there was an almost unanimous wish for the introduction of the hereditary principle. Josephine fell in with the enthusiasm that manifested itself on all sides, in spite of her repugnance at the outset. She only expressed to those in her immediate confidence the misgivings she felt at the elevation of her husband to sovereign power. The Senate had made the first move by an

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address presented to the First Consul two months before, and this example had been followed by the other government bodies. The plots and intrigues of the princes and of the exiles beyond the frontiers dealt a final blow to all wavering and irresolution.

The High Court took the initiative in this matter and the Council of State was consulted. The desire expressed by the High Court was submitted to the Senate, the members of the Legislative Corps, who happened to be present in Paris during the recess of that Assembly, also giving their adhesion to the measure. On the 18th of May a decree of the Senate was promulgated, conferring on Napoleon the hereditary title of Emperor, while the popular vote confirmed the decision of the great assemblies of the nation.

The Senate presented itself in a body at St Cloud, to lay before the new emperor the *Senatus Consultum* awarding him the imperial crown. The senatorial body next proceeded to offer their congratulations to the new empress. The High Chancellor Cambacérès, who presided over the Assembly, was the spokesman and addressed Josephine as follows :

“Madame, the Senate has still a very agreeable duty to perform, that of offering to your Imperial Majesty its respectful homage and the expression of the gratitude of the French people. Yes, madame, fame has spread far and wide the tidings of your many deeds of kindness, it says you are always easy of access to the unfortunate, and that you use your influence with the Chief of the State only to alleviate their sufferings ; that your Majesty not only takes pleasure in helping

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others, but does so with that admirable delicacy which renders gratitude warmer and the benefits conferred more precious. Such a disposition gives us the assurance that the name of the Empress Josephine will be the symbol of compassion and of hope ; and whereas the virtues of Napoleon will always serve as an example to his successors, teaching them the art of governing the nations, so will the unfading memory of your benevolence teach their august consorts that a life devoted to drying the tears of the sorrowful is the surest pathway to the sovereignty of hearts. The Senate congratulates itself on being the first to salute your Imperial Majesty, and he who has the honour to be its spokesman dares to hope that you will count him amongst the number of your most faithful servants."

The court was soon organized and the great offices of state apportioned. Mme. de la Rochefoucauld became lady-in-waiting to the empress. The emperor again visited the camp at Boulogne, the empress staying meanwhile at Aix-la-Chapelle, where the greatest honours were paid her. Fresh homage awaited the powerful sovereign of France and the empress at Mayence. Finally the imperial couple returned in the month of October to St Cloud to prepare a fitting reception for the Holy Father, whose arrival in Paris was expected for the consecration of the new Charlemagne.

During the few weeks which preceded the coronation, Josephine at one moment saw herself nearly sacrificed to the rancorous jealousies of the Bonaparte family.

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Grave dissensions arose indeed in the bosom of this family. Napoleon's sisters, always envious of the increasing influence of the Beauharnais, made desperate efforts to prevent Josephine from being crowned and to separate her from her husband. In her defence Josephine is said to have lodged a direct accusation against the beautiful Pauline Borghèse, at which Napoleon was rightly very indignant, aimed as it was at himself as well. He declared to Josephine that he was going to separate from her, that sooner or later he would have to do so, and that she had better resign herself at once to it. At the same time he summoned Eugène and Hortense, his two adopted children, and notified to them this resolve. Josephine's enemies, availing themselves cleverly of some indiscreet remarks which she had let fall in a momentary outburst of anger against their calumnies, had reason to think at one time that they were going to carry the day. But Josephine and her children, by their dignified and saddened demeanour, ended by triumphing over all these manoeuvres. In short, Napoleon, rejecting advice and insinuations the object of which was transparent, embraced his wife and declared his will that she should be crowned at his side by the venerable Pius VII.

The Pope, who had left Rome on the 2nd of November, made his entry into Paris at mid-day on the 25th of the same month. The Empress Josephine received His Holiness the same day in great state on the threshold of the peristyle of the Tuileries. M. Aubenas relates that the Holy Father was touched by the pious and tender respect of the empress' greeting.

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From this first moment, he adds, the Pope conceived a fatherly interest for her, proofs of which she soon received at his hands.

The reader has seen that at the time of Josephine's marriage to General Bonaparte in 1796, the celebration of a religious marriage had unfortunately been neglected. The empress had always secretly regretted this and rightly thought therefore that the moment had now come to retrieve this grave error. She broached the subject in confidence to the Holy Father, who appeared greatly shocked and strongly urged Napoleon to put an end, before the coronation, to a state of affairs so reprehensible and so irregular from the Church's point of view. The Pope, as can be easily understood, remained inflexible on this point, and made it a condition of the consecration.

Napoleon, though he had put aside the idea of divorce as premature, had nevertheless no intention of committing himself as to the future. He had a sort of undefined presentiment that certain circumstances might later on render this painful eventuality necessary. The new Cæsar was therefore much annoyed by Josephine's action in approaching Pius VII, and took her severely to task for having done so. Perhaps he also felt himself humiliated by such a confession, and therefore wounded in his pride, before the common Father of the Faithful. Josephine on the contrary was much gratified at the success of her efforts, and, on the very night before the Coronation, her union with Napoleon received religious consecration.

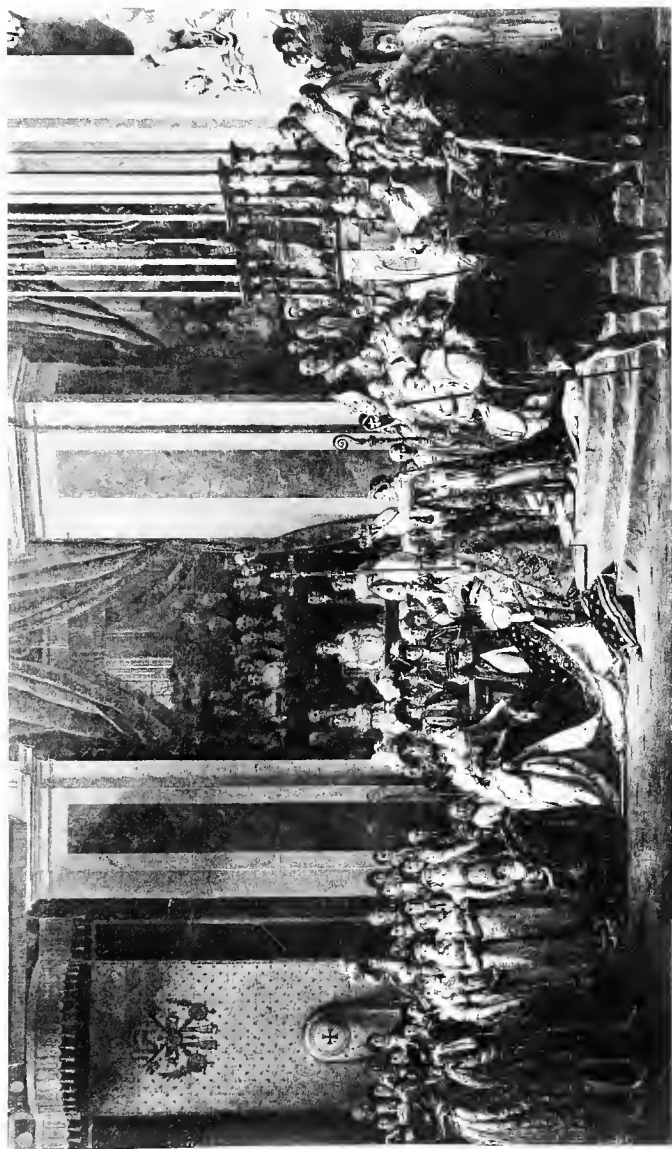
Cardinal Fesch officiated at the Tuileries in the

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greatest secrecy, and in the presence of Talleyrand and Berthier gave his blessing to Napoleon's marriage with Josephine, whose face still bore on the following day the traces of her emotion.

If Josephine set any store by her elevation and by the greatness she had never sought, it was chiefly on account of her children who were the very end of her existence.

M. Aubenas describes for us as follows the dress and the jewelry in which the Empress Josephine was arrayed on the day of the coronation. 'The empress wore a magnificent dress of silver brocade, with a long train, worked with golden bees, ornamented in front with foliage richly embroidered in gold thread and trimmed round the edge with a wide fringe and a flounce similarly embroidered; the shoulders only were uncovered; long sleeves with gold embroidery and enriched towards their upper end with diamonds enveloped the arms and covered half the hand. It required all Josephine's art and innate grace not to lose anything of her elegance and dignity with this garment, fashioned in accordance with the taste of the period, without fullness and without shape, and enriched besides with the Médicis strawberry in gold-embroidered lace, which had been added in order that the dress might harmonise in some historic detail with Napoleon's renaissance costume. A gold riband ornamented with thirty-nine rose-coloured stones fastened this *robe-tunique* beneath the bosom. Her taste for antique jewelry betrayed itself in the engraved precious stones of which her bracelets, her ear-rings and her necklace



THE CORONATION OF JOSEPHINE.
2nd. December, 1804.

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were composed. Lastly her beautiful and luxuriant hair was encircled and confined by a superb diadem, the work of M. Marguerite, who had also supplied the crown the empress was to receive at Notre-Dame, where, like Napoleon, she had to complete her toilet by fastening round her shoulders, with a golden cord and diamond clasp, the imperial mantle.*

We may borrow some further details regarding the empress from the same author.

‘Cardinal Cambacérès awaited the empress at the door, to offer her the holy water and to congratulate her. After a short speech she took her place under a canopy carried by the canons of the metropolitan chapter and continued her way towards the sanctuary accompanied by her introducer. Her head was already adorned with a diadem formed of four rows of pearls of the first water, interlaced with foliage in diamonds, which culminated in four magnificent diamonds on her forehead. Her long mantle of red

* Aubenas, vol. ii, p. 277. *Mémoires de Mademoiselle George*, in accordance with the original manuscript, by Mons. P. A. Chéramy, 1908. The Coronation Day: ‘The Emperor was calm and smiling, while the Empress Josephine was a marvel to everyone, displaying as always a perfect taste in her dress; she herself ever full of nobility, ever with that kindly expression on her face that attracted one to her. She was, beneath her fine clothes, the simplest and most enchanting of women. The diadem was carried with such grace that its weight did not seem to trouble her. She greeted her subjects so kindly and encouragingly that she won the sympathies of all. She was not wanting in dignity, but her smile attracted one, and made one approach her without fear, in the confidence that she would not repulse you. Indeed she was a really good woman. Greatness had not changed her: she was at once clever and warmhearted. What a misfortune was the Emperor’s divorce both for France and for himself.’

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velvet, worked with golden bees and entirely lined with ermine, was carried by the princesses, Joseph, Louis, Elisa, Pauline and Caroline, likewise arrayed in court mantles and covered with dazzling jewelry. Then followed, in one group, the lady-in-waiting, the lady of the bed-chamber, and the other ladies of the imperial household.'

In order to complete the description of this impressive coronation ceremony and to reproduce a faithful picture of it for the reader's benefit, it would be a mistake, we think, not to refer to the accounts given by eye-witnesses of this memorable event. Mme. d'Abrantès has related the particulars in such felicitous language that we cannot do better than quote *in extenso* the passage referring to the auspicious occasion.

'When the time arrived for her (Josephine) to take an active part in the great drama,' writes Junot's wife, 'the empress descended from the throne and advanced towards the altar where the emperor was awaiting her, followed by the ladies of the imperial household and her whole suite, her mantle being carried by the princesses Caroline, Julie, Elisa and Louis. One of the principal charms of the Empress Josephine lay, not merely in the elegance of her figure, but in the way she carried her head, the graceful and at the same time queenly manner she had of turning it and of walking. I have had the honour of being presented to many real princesses, according to the term used in the *faubourg St Germain*, and I must candidly confess that I have never met any who impressed me more than did Josephine. She possessed elegance combined with

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majesty ; and furthermore, once she had donned her imperial mantle, one might look in vain for the volatile woman of the world ; she was absolutely decorous in all her behaviour and never did queen understand better how to grace a throne without having been taught. I saw all that I have been saying in Napoleon's eyes. It delighted him to see the empress advancing towards him ; and when she knelt and the tears she could not repress rolled down over her folded hands, which she raised rather towards him than towards God, at this moment when Napoleon was for her veritably her providence, there fell to the lot of these two beings one of those fleeting moments, unique in a whole life time, which fill the void of many long years. The emperor displayed a perfect grace even in the most insignificant acts he had to perform during the ceremony, but this was especially noticeable when he had to crown the empress. This action had to be accomplished by the emperor, who, after receiving the small closed crown surmounted by a cross which was to be placed on Josephine's head, had first to put it on his own head and then set it on that of the empress. He carried out these two movements with a leisurely grace that was truly remarkable. But when the actual moment at last arrived for him to crown her who was for him, according to his conception, his *lucky star*, he *coquetted* with her, if I may be permitted the expression. He arranged the small crown, which surmounted the diamond diadem, by placing it on her head, taking it off and replacing it again ; it seemed as if he meant to

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promise her that the crown would be easy and light ! The various fine *nuances* of this incident must have been lost upon persons at a distance from the altar. Doubtless it has been related, because other eyes besides mine saw it just as I was able to see it ; still few were placed so well as I was, and my position revealed many things to me during those marvellous hours, which are now looked upon by most people as little more than a fairy tale.*

After the prolonged and solemn ceremony of the coronation, a herald advanced to the edge of the platform and proclaimed, in accordance with ancient custom : ‘The most glorious and most august Emperor Napoleon, Emperor of the French, is crowned and enthroned. Long live the Emperor !’ The resounding acclamations of the assembly greeted this announcement, and salvos of artillery blazoned abroad the proclamation of Napoleon and of Josephine.

‘Finally,’ writes M. Aubenas, ‘at seven o’clock the imperial procession re-entered the Tuileries. The emperor hastened to change into his simple uniform of colonel of his own regiment of *chasseurs* of the guard. Josephine was also longing for repose, but she returned radiant with happiness to this palace from which they had wanted to turn her out, not because she re-entered it wearing the crown predicted for her in childhood, but because she thought herself now linked indissolubly to the man she loved above all else.’†

* *Mémoires de la duchesse d’Abrantès*, vol. vii, p. 260.

† Aubenas, vol. ii.

CHAPTER X

PRESENTS, congratulations and demonstrations of affection of all sorts were showered upon Josephine after her coronation, and the Municipal Council of Paris offered her a magnificent gold-mounted toilet table. Martinique also, her native island, gave expression on this occasion to its feelings of joy and pride, due to the added greatness acquired by one of its daughters. Madame de la Pagerie, mother of the new empress, received simultaneously at Fort-de-France her share in the honours and ovations accorded to Josephine.

The year 1805, one of the most glorious in Napoleon's career, had begun well for Josephine's son. Already appointed colonel-in-chief, he had hardly started for Milan, where he was to join the emperor, before he was awarded the titles of prince of the empire and high-chancellor of State. This proof of affection touched Josephine profoundly, but did not alter in any way the modesty and quiet simplicity of Prince Eugène, certainly one of the noblest figures at the commencement of the nineteenth century. Mme. d'Abrantès has given

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the following portrait of Josephine's son in his early youth :

‘Eugène gave promise of being what he became, a charming and lovable boy. His whole bearing was stamped with an air of distinction the more attractive because it was coupled with qualities that rarely go with it, namely, frankness and an unvarying good humour. He was as merry as a child, but his merriment would never be aroused by anything that was in bad taste. He was lovable and courteous, extremely polite without being obsequious, and ironical without being rude, a lost talent. He acted very well, sang exquisitely, danced as his father had danced, and was altogether a very charming young man.’

Eugène had a special predilection for the military profession and for this reason he had refused on a previous occasion the appointment of high chamberlain, which his step-father had offered him.

The emperor and empress had already started for Italy at the beginning of April, directing their steps to Milan, where Napoleon was going to assume the iron crown of the ancient Lombard Kings. To his title of emperor he was going to unite that of King of Italy, and to confer, on the 7th of June 1805, the functions of viceroy on his step-son. This signal favour, accorded to a member of the Beauharnais family, must have been a cause of bitter annoyance to those of the Bonaparte family who detested them ; but it made Josephine supremely proud and happy to see her son appreciated as highly as he deserved.

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At this juncture Austria, ill-pleased and uneasy at the seizure of Italy by Napoleon, as well as at the formidable increase in the power of France, did not remain insensible to the admonitions of England. This last power was also uneasy at the vast preparations of the camp of Boulogne, which were being directed against her, and strained every nerve to create a counter diversion by stirring up the Continental powers against the new sovereign of France. Napoleon, abandoning with regret this gigantic enterprise, found himself under the necessity of actively confronting new dangers. This time it was no longer Austria alone that he had to meet, but Austria supported by Russia. We have neither the intention nor the presumption to give an account of this immortal campaign, of which various authors have written with a special knowledge we do not possess, a campaign which ended with the thunder-clap of Austerlitz.

Josephine's rôle was necessarily thrown into the shade during this period of war and victories, and does not furnish much material for the biographer. She contented herself with obeying the advice given her by her husband in a series of affectionate but brief epistles. He wrote her the following short note from Mannheim on the 2nd of October :

‘I am still here, in good health. I am leaving for Stuttgart where I shall arrive this evening. The great manœuvres are commencing. The army of Würtemberg and Baden is joining mine. I am in a favorable position and I love you.

‘NAPOLEON.’

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After ten years of married life one must not of course expect passionate letters like those of the first Italian campaign. One cannot fail to observe, nevertheless, how solid and sincere Napoleon's attachment to his wife has become in spite of passing storms. The ending of this note '*and I love you*' is more significant than any set phrases.

On the 4th of October the emperor wrote to Josephine from Ludwigsburg, the summer residence of the Elector of Würtemberg, whom a little later on he created a king :

'I am at Ludwigsburg. No new events of importance have happened yet. My whole army is in marching order. The weather is splendid. My junction with the Bavarians is accomplished. I am in good health. I hope to have something interesting to write you in a few days. Take care of yourself and do not forget I am always thinking of you. There is a very brilliant court here, a very lovely newly married bride, and altogether some very charming people ; amongst them I count even our Electress, who seems a most excellent person in spite of her being the daughter of the King of England.'

The daughter of the sovereign of Würtemberg was later on to wed Jérôme Bonaparte, afterwards King of Westphalia, the youngest of Napoleon's brothers, and grandfather, as we know, of the Princes Victor and Louis Bonaparte.

On the following day, the 5th of October, the emperor again wrote Josephine as follows :

'I am just starting again on my march. You will,

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my dearest, be five or six days without hearing from me ; do not be anxious on this account, as it is a necessary consequence of the operations that are about to be carried out. Everything is going on well, and quite in accordance with my anticipations. I have been present here at a wedding between the Elector's son and a niece of the King of Prussia. I want to give a present of thirty-six to forty thousand francs to the young princess. Please order one for me and send it by one of my chamberlains to the bride, when they come to rejoin me. It must be done at once. Goodbye, my dearest, I love you and embrace you.'

We may be sure that presents of this kind, chosen by Josephine, could not but be in perfect taste, and would probably therefore give real satisfaction to the recipients.

Five or six days later, he sends the empress another letter :

'I stayed last night with the former Elector of Trèves, who has a most comfortable house. For the last week I have been on the march. Some rather important successes have opened the campaign. I am in excellent health, though it is raining every day. Events are following each other in quick succession. I have sent to France four thousand prisoners and eight flags, and have captured fourteen of the enemy's guns. Goodbye, my dearest, I embrace you.'

Fortune smiled on Napoleon, for the capitulation of Ulm was now imminent. The emperor was indeed soon able to write :

'My army has entered Munich. The enemy on

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one side is beyond the Inn ; the other army of sixty thousand men I am blocking on the Iller, between Ulm and Memmingen. Our enemies are beaten and have lost their heads. Everything points to a most fortunate campaign, the shortest and the most brilliant which has taken place. I am leaving in an hour for Burgau on the Iller. I am keeping well, but the weather is horrible. It is raining so much that I have to change my clothes twice a day. I love you and embrace you.'

After seven days' silence employed in turning the flank of General Mack and his army and shutting them up in Ulm, Napoleon had the satisfaction of seeing his optimistic anticipations confirmed, and he announces the news to Josephine in these terms :

'I have been more fatigued, my dear Josephine, than I ought to have been ; wet through from morning to night every day for a whole week, and cold feet have given me some trouble ; but I have not been out to-day and am rested. I have accomplished my purpose ; I have destroyed the Austrian army by simple marches ; I have made sixty thousand prisoners and captured twenty cannon, over ninety flags and more than thirty generals. I am now going to attack the Russians ; they are lost. I am satisfied with my army. I have only lost fifteen hundred men, of whom two-thirds only slightly wounded. Goodbye, my dear Josephine ; a thousand loving greetings. Prince Charles is going to cover Vienna. I think Masséna must be now arriving at Vienna. As soon as my mind is easy about Italy, I will send

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Eugène to the front. A thousand greetings to Hortense.'

A little later on Napoleon wrote Josephine from inside Ulm :

'I am in pretty good health, my dearest ; I am just leaving for Augsburg. I have made thirty-three thousand men here lay down their arms. I have taken sixty to seventy thousand prisoners, more than ninety flags and more than two hundred cannon. Never has there been a like catastrophe in the annals of war ! Take good care of yourself. I am a little worried. The weather has been lovely for the last three days. The first column of prisoners starts to-day for France. Each column comprises six thousand men.'

Josephine, during this period, had approached as near as possible to the theatre of war. She had gone to Strasburg to await the result, and wrote a reassuring letter from this city to her daughter Hortense dated the 22nd October :

'My dear Hortense,—I had promised Prince Joseph, who wrote me a very polite letter, to send him a courier as soon as I received any news. I was able yesterday to fulfil my promise. M. de Thiars wrote me, by the emperor's orders, all the particulars of our victories, and I have had the news passed on to Prince Joseph. I have asked him to inform you and your husband also of everything. One triumph follows another, and to-day I have a letter from the emperor. I send it you and am sure it will give you as much pleasure as it has me. Please keep it and let me have it back

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on my return. All the members of the emperor's household are in good health. Not a single general has been wounded. You can tell this news to all the ladies whose husbands are with the army. On Thursday a *Te Deum* will be sung, and I shall give a fête on the same day to the ladies of Strasburg. Goodbye my dear Hortense, I love and embrace you fondly. My kindest regards to your husband and kisses to the children.'

By this time the Emperor Napoleon had reached Munich, where he was able to take some rest, but where he also received the news that Josephine was in a very nervous state. She was indeed always full of anxiety for those dear to her and absorbed in thinking of the dangers to which they were exposed. Napoleon shewed his sympathy by writing her a letter, somewhat less brief than the preceding ones, dated the 27th of October :

'I have received your letter through le Marois. I am sorry to see that you have been making yourself too anxious. Details have been given me which prove to me the depth of your affection for me ; but you must display more courage and more confidence. I warned you that I would be six days without writing you.

'I am expecting the Elector to-morrow. I start at midday to assure the success of my march on the Inn. My health is fairly good. You must not think of crossing the Rhine for another fifteen or twenty days. You must keep your spirits up and enjoy yourself, and just hope that we may see each other before the end of

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the month. I am advancing against the Russian army ; in a few days I shall have crossed the Inn.

‘ Goodbye, my dearest one. My kindest regards to Hortense, Eugène and the two Napoleons.* Keep the wedding present in the meantime.

‘ Yesterday I gave a concert to the ladies of this court. The band-conductor is a talented musician. I have been shooting pheasants on the Elector’s preserves. You see I am not so very tired. Mons. de Talleyrand has arrived.’

In addition to the anxieties which she could not but undergo owing to the vicissitudes of the war, anxieties experienced at one time on her son’s account, at another on that of her husband, sometimes for both at once, Josephine feared also the dangers of absence. It was no longer Napoleon, at this period, who gave signs of jealousy ; the rôles had changed and it was Josephine now who could not succeed in disguising hers. The empress realised the drawbacks which must arise for her from any sort of separation, even the briefest. Indeed, whenever Napoleon parted company from her, she would always have liked to follow or accompany him. Then neither fatigues nor privations deterred her. During the rapid and frequent journeys which Napoleon undertook, Josephine employed importunity and even cunning in order to follow him. Evidence of this is found in the *Mémorial* :

‘ If I went out driving in the middle of the night, I found Josephine to my great surprise installed in the

* The two sons of Louis Bonaparte and Hortense.

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carriage, although she was not intended to accompany me . . . and generally I had to give in !’

In all her letters to the emperor during the course of this campaign the empress asked to be allowed to join him. Napoleon did not take much notice of these requests and always avoided giving any positive answer. ‘I should have been very glad to see you,’ he writes to Josephine, ‘but do not count on my asking you to come, unless there is an armistice or we go into winter quarters. Good-bye, my dearest, a thousand kisses.’

While pursuing the Russians, who in conjunction with the remains of the Austrian forces were endeavouring to protect Vienna against the efforts of the Grand Army, Napoleon wrote to the empress a little later on :

‘I am at Lintz ; the weather is fine. We are twenty-eight leagues from Vienna. The Russians are not holding their ground. They are in full retreat. The Austrian royal family is in great embarrassment. At Vienna all the Court baggage is being removed. It is probable that there will be fresh news in five or six days. I am longing to see you again. My health is good. I embrace you.’

At last, on the 13th of November, Napoleon reached Vienna, whence he wrote to the empress to announce this great news to her as if it were quite a simple and natural thing ; no trace is to be found in this letter of vainglory nor even of legitimate pride. The equilibrium of his faculties was still perfect, and Napoleon was at this time not suffering in the least

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from any overweening idea of his own glory. Three days after the entry of the French army into Vienna, the emperor communicated to Josephine his wish that she should proceed to Munich, where she would find a fine palace and a hearty reception while awaiting the moment of their meeting. We think this letter, dated the 16th of November, is worth quoting in its entirety, as it is characteristic :

‘Vienna, 25th Brumaire, Year xiv.

‘I am writing to M. d’Harville to arrange for your journey to Baden, thence to Stuttgart, and thence on to Munich. At Stuttgart please give Princess Paul her wedding-present. It need not cost more than fifteen to twenty thousand francs ; the remainder will serve for presents to the daughters of the Elector of Bavaria at Munich. Bring with you sufficient to enable you to make presents to the ladies and officers who will be in attendance on you. Be polite but receive the homage of all : they owe you everything and you owe them nothing but politeness.

‘The Electress of Würtemberg is the daughter of the King of England : she is a good woman and you should treat her well, but without affectation.

‘I shall be very pleased to see you as soon as my duties allow of my doing so. I am leaving for my advance guard. The weather is awful : it is snowing hard ; otherwise my affairs are prospering. Good-bye, my dearest.

‘NAPOLÉON.’

At all the residences of the petty German sovereigns

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on her route Josephine's winning manners, her gracious affability, her tact and innate kindness of disposition gained for her the sympathies of all. She seemed to have been created and sent into the world for the express purpose of playing the high rôle that had been assigned to her to the greatest perfection. During her whole journey the empress had every description of homage and adulation lavished upon her ; in truth the brilliant fortunes of her husband and the fear they inspired contributed largely to this.

On the 2nd of December, the anniversary of the coronation of Napoleon and Josephine, the emperor gained the famous and decisive victory of Austerlitz over the Austro-Russian army.

CHAPTER XI

IN the meantime the Empress Josephine had arrived at Munich, where the Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian Joseph, had reason to congratulate himself that he had not taken part against Napoleon. This determination had been come to by the Bavarian sovereign only after prolonged and painful hesitation. Some further letters addressed by Napoleon to Josephine deserve quotation, deriving as they do a special interest from the dates on which they were written. The first is dated from Austerlitz on the 3rd December 1805 :

‘I have despatched Lebrun to you from the battlefield. I have beaten the Russian and Austrian army under the command of the two Emperors. I am somewhat fatigued; I have bivouacked for a week in the open air and the nights have been pretty cold. To-night I am staying in the Chateau of the Prince of Kaunitz, where I am going to sleep for two or three hours. The Russian army is not only beaten, it is destroyed. I embrace you.’

Another letter from Austerlitz :

‘ 5th December

‘ I have concluded a truce. The Russians are going. The battle of Austerlitz is one of my greatest victories : forty-five flags, more than a hundred and fifty guns, the standards of the Russian guards, twenty generals, thirty thousand prisoners, more than twenty thousand killed. A horrible spectacle !

‘ The Emperor Alexander is in despair and is leaving for Russia. I met the Emperor of Germany yesterday at my quarters ; we chatted for two hours ; we have agreed to make peace without delay.

‘ The weather is not very bad yet. Well, at last peace has been restored to the Continent ; it is to be hoped that it will soon be restored to the world, the English will hardly dare to oppose us. I am looking forward to the moment when I shall be again at your side. Good-bye, my dearest, I am keeping pretty well, and am longing to embrace you.’

Another letter, dated 7th December, from Austerlitz :

‘ I have concluded an armistice ; in a week peace will be settled. I am anxious to hear that you have arrived at Munich in good health. The Russians are going. They have suffered immense losses ; more than twenty thousand dead and thirty thousand taken prisoners. Their army is reduced to a quarter of its numbers. Buxhowden, their general in command, is killed. I have three thousand wounded and seven to eight hundred dead.

‘ I am suffering slightly from sore eyes ; the com-

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plaint is very prevalent but is of no importance. Goodbye, my dear, I am anxious to see you again.'

During the course of the negotiations for the conclusion of the peace of Pressburg, Josephine had been a considerable time without giving the emperor any of her news. This led to his writing her :

'It is a very long time since I have received any news from you ; are the splendid festivities of Baden, Stuttgart and Munich making you forget the poor soldiers who are leading a wretched existence exposed to wet and discomforts, and covered with mire and blood ? I am leaving shortly for Vienna. Efforts are being made for the conclusion of peace. The Russians have left and are already far away ; they are returning to Russia thoroughly beaten and much humiliated. I am longing much for your society. Goodbye, my dearest, my eyes are better.'

Napoleon, finding that Josephine does not answer, adopts the expedient of writing her in an ironical tone the following letter :

'Great Empress ! Not a single letter from you since you left Strassburg. . . . You have visited Baden, Stuttgart and Munich without writing us a word ; it is neither very kind nor very affectionate ! I am still at Brünn. The Russians are gone : there is a truce. In a few days I shall know what is going to become of me. Pray condescend, from the height of your greatness, to take some notice of your slaves.

'NAPOLEON.'

Josephine, since she had followed her husband on the battle-fields of Italy, had got into the way of

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accompanying him everywhere. She even wanted, it will be remembered, to cross the Mediterranean and go to Egypt with him. After the brilliant victories of this short and glorious campaign, her dearest wish would have been to go and rejoin the emperor at Vienna. To a letter from the empress, asking his authorisation for her to start for the capital of Austria, Napoleon replied :

‘I have just received your letter of the 25th ; I am grieved to hear that you are ailing ; that is not a promising condition for undertaking a journey of a hundred leagues at this season. I do not know what I am going to do ; I have no will at the moment, everything will depend on their action. Stay at Munich and enjoy yourself ; that cannot be difficult, where there are so many pleasant people and in such a beautiful country. For my part I have a great deal to think of. In a few days I shall have come to a decision. Goodbye, my dearest, a thousand affectionate and tender thoughts—N.’

On the 26th of December 1805 the peace of Pressburg was signed, and Napoleon left the following day for Munich.

At Munich, where Prince Eugène arrived at the Emperor Napoleon’s command on the 10th of January 1806, was to be forged the first link destined to connect the new imperial dynasty with the ancient reigning families of Europe. The fact is Josephine’s husband had cast his eyes upon Princess Augusta, daughter of Maximilian of Bavaria, with the idea

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of marrying her to his adopted son. At the same time Napoleon encouraged those concerned to hope that the crown of the kingdom of Italy, which he had created, would belong some day, after himself, to Prince Eugène and his descendants. We can easily imagine Josephine's gratitude and pleasure in seeing such high favours accorded to her dearly loved son. None indeed could have shown themselves better fitted for this high position than the man who, without any solicitation on his part and in such a flattering manner, was called upon to occupy it.

Josephine mentioned the news of this impending marriage to her daughter Hortense in the following terms :

‘Munich, 7th January 1806.

‘I must not lose an instant, my dear Hortense, in letting you know that Eugène's marriage to the Princess Augusta, daughter of the Elector of Bavaria, has just been definitely arranged. You will feel deeply, as I do, the value of this new proof of attachment which the emperor is giving to your brother. Nothing in the world could be more agreeable to me than this alliance. The young princess possesses, in addition to a charming exterior, all the qualities which render a woman interesting and lovable.’

Napoleon also hastened to write to his sister-in-law and step-daughter :

‘My daughter,—Eugène arrives to-morrow and will be married within four days. I should have been very glad if you could have managed to be present at his wedding, but it is now too late. The Princess

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Augusta is tall, beautiful and full of good qualities, and you will have a sister in every respect worthy of you. My kindest remembrances to M. Napoleon.'

A few days later Prince Eugène and his bride left for Milan, where they were to reside, while Napoleon and Josephine made their preparations for departure and left Munich, arriving in Paris on the 26th of January. Napoleon had rapidly climbed the steps which lead to universal sovereignty. He would have liked to find in his family a number of young princesses whose union with foreign princes he could have arranged in order to draw closer the bonds of his alliance with the reigning houses of different states. Not finding what he wanted in the Bonaparte family, the emperor had to look for compensation in Josephine's family, and shortly afterwards he married Mlle. Stephanie de Beauharnais to the hereditary Prince of Baden. The Marquis François de Beauharnais, Josephine's brother-in-law, and Count Claude, her first cousin, became simultaneously the personal recipients of the new French monarch's favours and munificence.

At the same period Napoleon made his brother Louis King of Holland, while Prince Joseph Bonaparte became, by the same all-powerful will, King of Naples. A kingdom of Westphalia was ere long to be created in favour of Jérôme, the youngest of Napoleon's brothers, as soon as he had married Princess Catherine of Würtemberg.

Although flattered at seeing her children so well

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provided for, Josephine, as an affectionate mother, was depressed at her daughter's approaching departure for Holland. The unhappy relations which existed between Louis Bonaparte and his wife were also a great sorrow to Josephine; she bitterly regretted having so strongly insisted, four years ago, on her tenderly loved daughter contracting such an unfortunate union.

On the 15th of July 1806, the empress, distressed at Queen Hortense's absence and their enforced separation, wrote her as follows :

'Since you left I have been continually ailing, sad and unhappy; I have been obliged to keep my bed, as I have had some feverish attacks. The illness has quite gone, but the grief remains. How can it be otherwise, separated as I have been from a daughter like you, affectionate, sweet and lovable, the joy of my life? . . . How is your husband? . . . Are my grandchildren well? Oh! how sad I am that I can no longer see them sometimes! And is your own health good, my dear Hortense? If you ever are ill, let me know; I will come at once to be near my beloved daughter. . . . Good-bye, my dear Hortense, my sweet child, think often of your mother and be assured there is no daughter so dearly loved as yourself.'

In the meantime, Prussia, displeased at the remarkable and ever increasing development of the French dominion, began to lend a willing ear to the exhortations of England and Russia. This last power was eager to avenge the humiliation of its bloody defeat at

Austerlitz. The creation of the kingdoms founded in favour of Napoleon's brothers in the north as well as in the south of Europe aggravated the feelings of resentment already entertained by the Russian and Prussian governments. They therefore deemed it necessary to check at all costs the further progress of the French emperor's growing preponderance. It was only the brilliant victory he had gained at Austerlitz which had prevented Prussia from declaring herself against Napoleon at an earlier date. Queen Louise and the court magnates of King Frederick William, their imaginations fired by the glorious recollection of the great Frederick, urged the Prussian monarch strongly to declare war to France. An arrogant ultimatum addressed on the 1st of October to the ministry of the Tuileries by the representative of Prussia, M. de Knobelsdorf, rendered inevitable a war which Napoleon would have preferred not to undertake or at any rate to have been able to postpone.

Before leaving Paris to put himself at the head of his army, the emperor had authorised Josephine to proceed to Mayence, so that she might be nearer the scene of operations. He had at the same time enjoined her to hold her court there and to let Queen Hortense pay her a visit. The empress now wrote as follows to the latter :

‘All your letters, my dear Hortense, are charming, and you are very kind to write to me so often. I have news also of Eugène and his wife ; I see that they are happy, and I am so myself, especially at this moment, for I am going with the emperor and am making my

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preparations for the journey. I assure you that I am not the least afraid of this new war, if it has to take place ; but the nearer I am to the emperor, the less afraid I shall be, and I feel that I could not live if I stayed here. Another cause for joy is that I shall see you again at Mayence. The emperor bids me tell you that he has just given the King of Holland an army of eighty thousand men, and that his command will extend to near Mayence ; he thinks that you will come and stay at Mayence ; you can judge, my dear Hortense, whether that is not a piece of pleasant news for a mother who loves you as tenderly as I do. Every day we shall receive news from the emperor and from your husband ; we shall enjoy it together. The Grand Duke of Berg has been speaking to me about your children ; kiss them for me until I am able to embrace them myself, my dear daughter, and I hope that will be soon. My very kindest regards to the King.*

Napoleon had just taken the field and was hurrying the march of his divisions with the object of crushing Prussia before the arrival of the Emperor of Russia's forces. He wrote Josephine a letter from Géra, on

* Letter from the Empress Josephine to Méneval, the emperor's secretary : 'I am much obliged to you, my dear Menneval (sic), for your kind care in giving me news of the emperor and I would ask of you the same exactness during the whole course of the campaign. I await your bulletins with great impatience ; tell me about the emperor, his health, his doings ; these are the tidings I shall always read first, and by the value I set on them you can judge of all the pleasure you will be giving me. Goodbye, my dear Mennevalle, (sic) you know how highly I think of you.

'JOSEPHINE.'

'Mayence, 11th October 1806.'

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the 13th October, which was prophetic of the brilliant successes he achieved later on :

‘I am to-day at Géra, my dearest ; my affairs are prospering and everything is going as I hoped it would. With God’s help matters will in a few days have assumed, I think, a very terrible aspect for the poor King of Prussia, for whom personally I am sorry, because he is a good man. The queen is at Erfurt with the King. If she wants to see a battle, she will have this cruel pleasure. I am wonderfully well ; I have already grown stouter since my departure ; and yet I am actually travelling twenty to twenty-five leagues every day, on horseback, by carriage, and in every conceivable manner. I turn in at eight o’clock, and am up again at midnight ; sometimes I reflect that you have not gone to bed yet. Ever yours.’

On the following day, the 14th October 1806, the emperor’s predictions were brilliantly verified, the Prussian army being annihilated at the celebrated battle of Jena. From the field of battle Napoleon gave Josephine an account, dated 15th October, of his fresh victory :

‘My dear, I have carried out some fine manœuvres against the Prussians. I gained yesterday a great victory. They had a hundred and fifty thousand men ; I made twenty thousand prisoners, took a hundred cannon and some flags. I was in the King’s presence and quite close to him ; I nearly captured both him and the queen. The last two days I have bivouacked in the open air. I am wonderfully well. Good-bye, my dearest, take care of yourself and love me.’

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On the 25th October Napoleon made his entry into Berlin.

Josephine, during this period, held her court at Mayence, accompanied by Queen Hortense and her two children, as well as by the Grand Duchess Stephanie of Baden, *née* Beauharnais. She busied herself with her customary benevolence in ameliorating the lot of the officers, who were prisoners of war, and in aiding the poor wounded soldiers. In his bulletins from the field of battle, Napoleon had spoken of the Queen of Prussia in very harsh terms, and without any attempt to moderate his language, comparing her to Armida, setting fire in her frenzy to her own palace. Josephine, whose principal characteristic was kindness of heart, had remonstrated with her husband for his uncourteous expressions, and the latter had replied—knowing that this would please her—by telling her of the favour he had shown to Madame de Hatzfeld, when she had come to ask the emperor's pardon for her husband, who had been condemned to death. This circumstance, which does great credit to Napoleon, is related in the well known letter which he wrote at the time to Josephine, and which ends with the words: 'You see therefore that I appreciate good, simple, and kindhearted women; but this is because they are the only ones who are like you.'

In spite of the pleasure Josephine always experienced at being again in the company of her dearly loved daughter, Napoleon's prolonged absence and the distance which separated him from her, began to disturb her and to weigh upon her mind. In 1805,

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a year earlier, we have seen that she had earnestly desired to join the emperor at Vienna, but had received no encouragement from him to do so. Now it was to come to him at Berlin that she entreated Napoleon's permission. With this object in view, therefore, she addressed Méneval, the emperor's secretary, in the following letter :

‘ Mayence, 26th November 1806.

‘ I have received with pleasure, my dear Mennevalle, (*sic*) the news you give me about the emperor, but I am surprised that he complains of not receiving letters from me, for I have written him at least three times a week, and I have received nothing from him since the 16th. But I am glad to know that he is in good health and that he does not altogether dislike his stay at Berlin. I wish I could say the same about Mayence. Even the air is not particularly good and will become worse, as the arrival is announced of four hundred Prussians ill with dysentery.

‘ You will oblige me by reminding the emperor that he has still to give me a reply as to a journey that he proposes I should make to Berlin. Goodbye, my dear Mennevalle (*sic*), please continue to send me news ; with kind regards,

‘ JOSEPHINE.’

Ingenious in finding pretexts for obtaining what she had at heart, Josephine pretended in this letter that she had received—in connection with her proposed journey to Berlin—some encouragement from Napoleon. She did not even perceive that she was

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here asking her husband to reply to a proposal, of which the initiative, judging by the expressions used in the letter above quoted, came from himself! It is more probable that the emperor never had at this period any intention like the one attributed to him by Josephine, for although the Prussian campaign was ended, the war with Russia continued, obliging Napoleon and his army to pursue their march into the heart of Poland.

CHAPTER XII

IN spite of the emperor's expostulations, which were meant to dissuade her from coming to join him in Prussia and in Poland, Josephine persisted in importuning her husband to grant her this permission as a favour. His unwillingness to do so became in time a real grief to her, and in several of the letters Napoleon addressed to his wife he tried in vain to reason with her. It is impossible for us to reproduce here the whole of the correspondence between the emperor and Josephine, which is to be found in the Didot collection, and from which we have already borrowed several passages. We shall content ourselves with quoting the following letter, dated at the end of January 1807, a few days before the bloody victory of Eylau :

‘My dear, your letter of 20th January has grieved me ; it is too melancholy. That is the result of your not exercising a little more pious resignation ! You tell me that your happiness is your glory : that is not generous ; you should say : the happiness of others is my glory ; it is not conjugal ; you should say : my husband's happiness is my glory ;

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it is not motherly ; you should say : my children's happiness is my glory ; now, since mankind, your husband, your children, cannot be happy without a little glory, you should not think so lightly of it ! Josephine, your heart is excellent but your logic is feeble ; you feel to perfection, but you reason less satisfactorily. Now, I have quarrelled with you enough ; I want you to be happy, contented with your lot, and I want you also to be obedient, not grumbly and tearfully, but cheerfully and even gladly. Adieu, my dear ; I am starting to-night to visit my outposts.'

Husband and wife no longer spoke the same language. Napoleon seems in this letter only to be occupied with his glory. Josephine, on the other hand, must have thought that this word suggested itself too often to her husband's pen ; she was uneasy and grieved to see this indefatigable master spirit tempting fortune so persistently and with so much rashness. Both Napoleon's consorts would in their day have preferred a peaceable existence and one free from storms to the terrible anxieties which their husband's adventures, glorious as they were, continually caused them.

Before returning to Paris, which she did on the 31st January 1807, Josephine, in accordance with the emperor's wishes, had visited Frankfort, with Queen Hortense and the Grand-Duchess of Baden, and had there received from the prince-primate a welcome suited to their rank. It was during this Polish campaign, which ended with the two victories of

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Eylau and Friedland, that Josephine's jealousy was aroused, not without serious cause, by malicious reports. In the interval the emperor had returned to Warsaw. 'He spent the whole of the month of January there,' writes the emperor's private secretary.* 'While this pause was affording breathing space to the army, Napoleon was giving entertainments and concerts to the Polish ladies. He did not remain insensible to the charms of one of them, whose tenderness and devotion remained constant in days of adversity.' Neither Josephine's apprehensions, which we have referred to above, nor her presentiments, had on this occasion misled her. She wrote despairing letters to her husband, declaring that she preferred rather to die than to bear any longer a separation which threatened to last for ever.

It should be added that with Josephine's jealous suspicions were mingled considerations of an infinitely graver character. Rumours had again begun to circulate of the possibility of a divorce. Fouché, that dangerous protégé of Napoleon's first wife, took upon himself to disseminate here, there, and everywhere these reports, for which he tried to find evidence in order to increase the importance of his own rôle. This individual's crafty and intriguing disposition and his proverbial ingratitude prevented him from considering the odiousness of playing such a part towards one who had always been his benefactress. A little later on, during the second half of 1807, while the court was in

* Méneval, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Napoléon I^{er}* (published by Dentu), vol. ii, p. 80.

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residence at Fontainebleau, the ambassador Metternich was able to write to Vienna, with regard to the Empress Josephine :

‘I have had the honour of informing Your Excellency* in several of my previous reports regarding the rumours which have for long been in circulation as to the emperor’s impending divorce. After being at first only whispered, these rumours have been, for nearly two months now, the subject of public and general discussions. It is in this case the same as with all tales that are not stifled at their birth ; they rest on a basis of truth and would have very soon been discredited if they had not been purposely tolerated.’†

Who could it have been that vouched for the truth of such rumours in Paris vis-a-vis the foreign *Corps diplomatique* ? Perhaps Talleyrand ; certainly Fouché. It is interesting to note that the two conspicuous men of this period, who were most notorious for their crafty methods, their intriguing spirit and their treacheries, were two ex-members of the priesthood, false to their oaths both to God and to his Church. It seems natural therefore to give here the portrait of one of these men, each of whom exercised such a baleful influence on the fortunes both of Josephine and of Napoleon.

As regards his physique, Fouché was fairly tall, but of an almost consumptive leanness. He had a livid complexion and bloodshot eyes, small and piercing, under eyebrows of a pale sandy red. His features taken collectively reminded one greatly of Marat’s

* Count Stadion, Austrian minister of foreign affairs.

† St Amand. *Les Femmes des Tuileries*.

physiognomy ; the face had a similar cast, but his glance was less piercing.* Fouché throughout his whole life subordinated his opinions, his feelings and his affections, if he was ever capable of real affection, to his private interests. He had neither principles nor beliefs, and advanced towards the goal of his ambition with the suppleness and stealth of a feline animal. He possessed the art of circumventing so completely those whom he intended to deceive that he seemed to penetrate the depths of their most secret thoughts.

Power ! this was Fouché's *idée fixe*. To gain it and to keep it, what would he not have sacrificed ? Never having loved or formed an attachment for any one, no scruple restrained, no obstacle deterred him. To retain a predominant position in the realm he would have willingly resigned himself to ruining for ever his most devoted agents or those who were naïve enough to think themselves his best friends.

An intriguer devoid of religious belief or scruples, Fouché was resolved to have his finger in every pie, to penetrate into everything that was kept concealed from him, to take his precautions against the men in power, and in his interviews with those against whom he had himself instigated harsh measures, he confidentially accused the Chief of the State of being the real originator of the proceedings. Determined to know everything, to control everything, to provide for everything, grovelling in his relations with the emperor and never running counter to

* Described in conformity with the memoranda of a contemporary of the Duke of Otranto.

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his wishes, this individual so fertile in resources took care to secure for himself guarantees for the future when he executed any of his sovereign's commands. A shameless liar, with an air of frankness and independence, he sought tools and confederates even amongst the enemies of the government, of which he claimed to be the principal supporter. Insolent when his ends were gained, Fouché dispensed with the observance of even the most elementary courtesy towards those in adversity. After Napoleon's second abdication, for instance, he entered the emperor's cabinet with his hat on, in the capacity of president of the provisional government. He assured Napoleon that he had instructed the delegate appointed by the Chambers to accept anything but the Bourbons, while all the time he was negotiating with Wellington in favor of their return.

A description of the Duke of Otranto would be incomplete without the mention of some further characteristic traits :

Without openly betraying the different governments under whom he served, Fouché made his preparations for the future by being the first to desert the cause of those who he saw were ready to abandon it themselves. Without other political views than his own personal interest, without an intelligent foresight of the events of the morrow, he was generally blinded by his egotism. His natural perfidy had not even the excuse of being provoked by rancour or the desire of revenge, for in reality he neither loved nor hated any one. A continual appetite for intrigue was the mainspring of all his actions, because he was discontented with all those

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whom he served, considering that they never gave him either enough power or enough money.

A savage revolutionary at the outset, but afterwards greedy for titles and honours, Fouché flattered the *faubourg Saint-Germain* and ended by marrying a Mlle. de Castellane in the hope of making people forget that he had formerly had the partisans of the aristocracy shot down by hundreds in order to make himself agreeable to the Committee of Public Safety. In spite of the cleverness on which he so much prided himself, he allowed himself not infrequently to be entangled in his own snares. With an overweening idea of his own talents and of what was due to him, this regicide thought he would be able to dictate to Louis XVIII, and that the latter would accept without mental reservation the interested services which the Duke of Otranto laid at his feet in the hope they would meet with his approval. But Fouché soon had to undergo at the hands of Napoleon's successor, whom he had betrayed in favour of the brothers of Louis XVI, the most cruel punishment for his infamous conduct. The new sovereign of France indeed lost no time in sending this dangerous intriguer in the capacity of French Ambassador to Dresden, to the court of King Frederick-Augustus, who declined even to receive the man who had been one of the executioners of the royal family in 1793. Banished at first to Prague, abandoned by all the parties in the State whom he had successively duped and betrayed, Fouché died in exile of rage and vexation in the year 1820.

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While the war with Russia was being pursued with comparative sluggishness, and a few weeks before the decisive victory of Friedland, a great misfortune overtook the Empress Josephine, always so attached to her family, and utterly crushed the unfortunate Queen Hortense. This was the death of the prince royal of Holland, elder brother of Napoleon III, which occurred on the 5th of May 1807. Josephine's sorrow was keen, that of Queen Hortense heartrending. The empress, always full of solicitude, hastened to the palace of Laeken to await the arrival of her unhappy daughter, on whom she lavished the most tender care and the most kindly efforts at consolation. Napoleon himself, busy with his campaign on the Russian frontiers, evinced also a lively sympathy with Josephine's grief and with that of his young nephew's parents. The correspondence indeed bears evidence of this fact. Napoleon, it was supposed, intended to make the young prince his heir presumptive, as he liked to have him near him and often enjoyed taking part in his games.

Queen Hortense remained for long inconsolable for the death of her beloved son. As we are again speaking of Josephine's daughter it seems now a fitting occasion for placing before the reader the portrait that Mme. d'Abrantès has sketched of her in the *Mémoires* which she has left us :

'She (Hortense) was cheerful, sweet, extremely kindhearted, and of a ready wit which combined this cheerful sweetness with just enough malicious humour to be extremely piquant and to render her conversation

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attractive ; she possessed talents which needed no heralding abroad to make them known. Her facility in drawing, the harmony of her improvised songs, her remarkable talent for acting, an education that had been carefully attended to, these were Hortense de Beauharnais' characteristics in 1800, at the time of my marriage. She was then a charming young girl ; she has since become one of the most amiable princesses in Europe.'

The lamentable death of the Empress Josephine's grandson reconciled for the moment his afflicted parents. They proceeded together, in the autumn, to a watering-place in the Pyrenees, and in April of the following year (1808) Queen Hortense gave birth to her third son, the future Emperor Napoleon III.

The victory of Friedland, (14th June 1807) after those of Jéna, Auerstadt and Eylau, had at last decided the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia to make peace, and on the 19th June Napoleon sent the young Louis Tascher, the Empress Josephine's cousin, to announce the fact to her :

'My dear,' wrote Napoleon, 'I have just seen the Emperor Alexander ; I was very pleased with him : he is a very handsome, good young man and has more intellect than he is usually credited with. He is coming to stay in town to-morrow at Tilsit.'

In spite of the rumours of divorce which were continually in circulation, one can still see from a letter of Napoleon's to Josephine, dated the 18th of July, after peace had been signed, that the empress had not lost her place in her husband's affections :

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‘My dear,’ he writes, ‘I arrived yesterday at Dresden at five in the afternoon, in capital health, although I had travelled for one hundred hours by carriage without ever getting out. I am staying here with the King of Saxony, whom I like very much. I am therefore more than half-way on my return journey to you. It may be that one of these beautiful nights I will surprise you at St Cloud, like a jealous lover ; I warn you. Good-bye, my dear, I shall be so glad to see you. Ever yours.

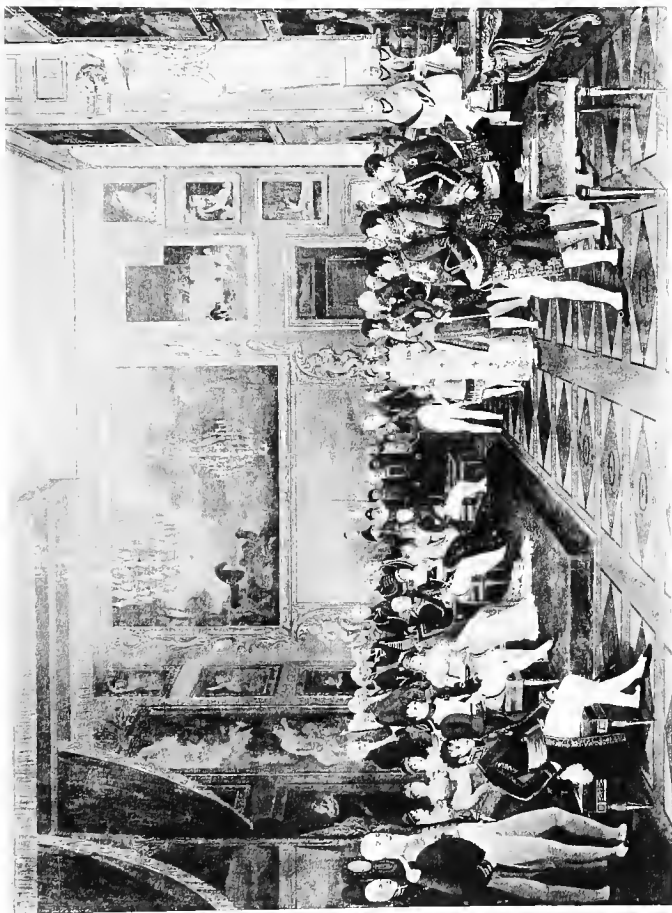
‘NAPOLEON.’

It seems certain, however, that at Tilsit, as a result of his intimate conversations with the Emperor of Russia, the idea of an eventual divorce must have more than once crossed Napoleon’s mind. Having completely abandoned, since the events of 1806, the dream he had cherished of a close understanding with Prussia, the Emperor, captivated by Alexander’s good qualities, nourished the hope of substituting therefor a close and durable alliance with Russia. He had counted without his host, whose ambiguous manner had put him off the scent, but who did not display, in his professions of cordiality, the same sincerity as Napoleon.

The emperor re-entered Paris on the 28th of July, surrounded with a fresh halo of glory, and amid the acclamations of enthusiastic multitudes. The year 1807 marks the culminating point of the greatness of the Empire. From the moment of his return Napoleon busied himself in putting a final touch to

the organisation of the imperial court. We shall refer specially to the posts of honour in the Empress Josephine's household, which, writes M. Aubenas, was composed as follows : principal chaplain, M. Ferdinand de Rohan, former Archbishop of Cambrai ; lady-in-waiting, Mme. Chastulé de la Rochefoucauld ; lady of the bed-chamber, Mme. de Lavalette ; ladies of the household : Mmes. de Rémusat, de Luçay, de Talhouët, de Lauriston, maréchale Ney, d'Arberg, maréchale Lannes, Duchâtel, Walsh-Serrant, de Colbert, Savary, Octave and Philippe de Ségur, de Turenne, Montalivet, de Bouillé, de Vaux, Marescot, de Peron, Solar, Lascaris-Vintimiglia, de Brignole, de Gentille, de Canisy, de Chevreuse, Maret, Victor de Mortemart, and Montmorency-Matignon. Eight chamberlains were attached to the empress' service. General Nansouty performed the functions of first chamberlain ; the others were MM. de Beaumont, Hector d'Aubusson, La Feuillade, de Galard-Béarn, de Saint-Simon-Courtemer, de Grave, de Montesquiou and du Manoir. M. d'Harville, senator, was appointed *chevalier d'honneur* ; General Ordener, master of the horse ; Colonels Fouler and Corbineau, equerries.

In the month of September of the same year, the emperor and empress betook themselves to Fontainebleau where they resided for three months. The palace had been embellished by command of Napoleon, who held a brilliant court there. The *corps diplomatique* and strangers of distinction were admitted, and sumptuous entertainments were given to celebrate



THE MARRIAGE OF PRINCE EUGENE DE BEAUHARNAIS AND PRINCESS AMELIA OF BAVARIA.

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the marriage of the new King of Westphalia to Princess Catherine of Würtemberg.

An account must be given here of Fouché's insolent caprice, mention of which has, it will be remembered, already been made. M. de Lavalette, postmaster-general under the first Empire and husband of a niece of Josephine's, has related in his *Mémoires* the incident of which Fouché was the sinister cause. The former postmaster-general tells how the Empress Josephine had one day summoned him; he found her extremely dejected, with downcast eyes, and she informed him of the conversation she had just had with the Duke of Otranto. The latter had accosted the empress, telling her it had become necessary that she should give France and the emperor a great proof of her devotion. Then, explaining himself more clearly, he let Josephine understand that the emperor earnestly desired to have an heir of his own blood; that after ten years of married life the empress could no longer cherish the hope of giving him one, and that she had therefore become the sole obstacle to the consolidation of her husband's throne. Fouché added that this circumstance imposed on the empress the necessity of making a great sacrifice. He knew, he said, how painful such an act of self-abnegation would be for Josephine, but was sufficiently aware of her innate loftiness of purpose to be persuaded that she would resign herself to it. "The emperor," he continued, "will not himself enforce this sacrifice; I know his attachment for you. Be greater even than he is, and give this last token of your devotion to the

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country and to the emperor ; history will commend your action, and you will take precedence of the most illustrious women who have occupied the throne of France.”

The empress, according to her own admission, was so taken aback by this monstrous proposition, that she could only answer her interlocutor in vague and disjointed phrases. “Tell me what I must do,” she is reported to have said to Lavalette, “you who are attached to me by the ties of kindred and of devotion.—Is it not evident that Fouché has been sent by the emperor and that my fate is sealed? Alas! it is nothing to me to have to abdicate the throne ; who knows better than myself all the tears my sovereignty has cost me! But to lose at the same time the man to whom I have consecrated my dearest affections, this sacrifice is more than I can bear !”

Méneval, the emperor’s private secretary, has also made a note in his *Mémoires*, which refers to the same incident.*

‘Ever since the end of 1807,’ he writes, ‘Fouché had endeavoured to sound public opinion as to an eventual divorce, and he had thrown out the idea of an alliance between Napoleon and the Grand Duchess Catherine of Russia. He knew that the emperor was reluctant to separate his destiny from that of a wife who was both loving and devoted. He wanted to have the credit of forcing his hand, and spoke to some

* *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de Napoléon I^{er}*, vol. ii, note to page 284.

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members of the senate about the divorce as a step that had been determined upon ; finally he presented himself to Josephine as an officious intermediary. The empress, astounded at the proposition, and thinking that Fouché had been sent by the emperor, replied with melancholy resignation that she would deem no sacrifice too great if it were made in obedience to her husband. Napoleon, unaware of these underhand doings, found Josephine one day in tears and obtained from her a confession of the line of conduct Fouché had permitted himself to adopt towards her. Indignant at such audacity, he set for his minister and treated him as he deserved ; he would even have dismissed him on the spot from the ministry of police, if he had had some one at hand to put in his place.'* Fouché owed much to Josephine, as M. Aubenas has rightly pointed out. He displayed on this occasion that bold ingratitude which characterises ambitious men desirous at all costs of improving or retaining their position, a class prone to treachery, on whom favours are thrown away, seeing that nothing they obtain is ever sufficient for their insatiable desires. The minister of police had given expression to a fictitious opinion. No one, at this period at any rate, was in favour of the emperor's divorce. The Empress Josephine was more popular than ever.

Napoleon had not yet made up his mind to the divorce, and nothing could be more opposed to his

* Fouché obtained the support of Murat and of the emperor's brothers, who succeeded in appeasing his anger.

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wishes than to inflict on his unfortunate spouse a premature sorrow ; on the contrary he would have desired to spare her from having the threat of an eventual divorce continually suspended over her head. Josephine therefore, after this fresh alarm, recovered, partially at least, her equanimity and feeling of security ; but a new affliction was to befall her at the end of 1807. Her mother, Madame de la Pagerie, whom she had vainly endeavoured to induce to join her in France, died in Martinique, but the news of her decease was long in being conveyed to the empress, Napoleon having been anxious to spare his wife's feelings.

In November the emperor made a visit to his kingdom of Italy, but without taking Josephine with him, though she would have much liked to accompany him. It was in the course of this journey that Napoleon, wishing to give Josephine and her children a manifest proof of his affection, solemnly adopted Prince Eugène as his successor to the crown of Italy. Finally, in the month of January 1808, the emperor, always desirous of giving his wife's family tokens of his benevolent interest, favoured the marriage of a niece of Josephine's, Mlle. Stéphanie Tascher, to the Prince of Arenberg, the colonel of a French regiment.

CHAPTER XIII

THREE months of repose, in the agitated and inordinately active existence to which the Emperor Napoleon was accustomed, caused time to hang heavy on his hands. Unfortunately for him, the events which ever since the commencement of the year 1808 had been succeeding each other in Spain, soon compelled him to fix all his attention on that country. The feeble King Charles IV and his spouse, the queen, who were docile instruments in the hands of the notorious Godoï, Prince de la Paix, had excited the Spanish popular sentiment against themselves. Prince Ferdinand, the heir to the throne, a declared enemy of Godoï, had placed himself at the head of the malcontents, and the most deplorable dissensions divided the royal family. The emperor, who dreamed of placing members of his own family on all the thrones of the Bourbons, thought to find in the Spanish situation a favorable pretext for interfering in these quarrels. He made the mistake of choosing the side of the feebler party, namely that of the old sovereign of Spain, for, had he taken Ferdinand's part, it is probable that he would have rallied round him the whole Spanish nation. It seems likely that Ferdinand's

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base and hypocritical character prevented Napoleon—once he had formed his opinion of this prince—from pronouncing in favor of his cause. If nature had endowed Ferdinand with an *ensemble* of qualities diametrically opposite to those he possessed, France as well as Spain might have been spared great misfortunes.

However this may be, the emperor formed the resolution, which was destined to be such a fatal one for him, to mix himself up with the affairs of the Peninsula, and ordered Murat, who had been given the command of a large army, to cross the Pyrenees. On the 2nd of April Napoleon, accompanied by the empress, left in person for Bayonne, a frontier town, where he had agreed to meet the Spanish princes. The emperor took leave of Josephine at Bordeaux, where he left her, as he had never intended her to be present at the Bayonne conferences.* Arriving on the 15th in this town, Napoleon at once busied himself in preparing the chateau of Marrac, where he wished to receive the Spanish royal family, and where Josephine was to be entrusted with the task of doing the honours to King Charles IV and the queen.

* A letter from Méneval to his wife, dated 5th April 1808, may be quoted in this connection: *Bordeaux*. 'I expect we shall stay two days here and then continue our journey to Bayonne. The empress should be here in three or four days. It was originally intended that she should remain in Paris, and she was very disappointed at this. She had told M. Deschamps (her secretary) to go and fetch you on Tuesday, that is to-day, and bring you to spend the day with her at Malmaison, where she was to be alone. But, just as he was getting into his carriage, the emperor consented to her coming to Bordeaux. You may conceive her joy. She was luckier than you!'

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It was at Bordeaux, in the course of this month of April 1808, that Josephine received news of the birth of Queen Hortense's third son, the future Napoleon III, who was born on the 8th April 1808 at Paris. The empress, overjoyed at this happy event, wrote from Bordeaux to her daughter Hortense on 25th April :

‘I have a letter from the emperor, my dear Hortense, in which he says he had heard that you had given birth to a boy, and that the news had given him great pleasure. The emperor commands me, at the same time, to come and rejoin him at Bayonne ; you can imagine, my dear child, that it is a great happiness for me to remain beside the emperor, and I am leaving to-morrow very early in the morning.’

The satisfaction which Napoleon and Josephine experienced would have been much enhanced, M. Aubenas justly remarks, if they could have foreseen that this child was destined one day to re-establish the imperial dynasty.

The Court remained at Bayonne and at Marrac for three months. King Charles IV and the queen, preceded by Prince Ferdinand, their eldest son, had arrived at Bayonne on the 30th April, followed by sundry Spanish grandees and by their dear friend and favourite Godoï. A magnificent reception had been prepared for the aged king and queen. The effect which must have been produced on the elegant Court of the French Emperor and Empress by their equipages and their antiquated fashions must have been highly comical. One can therefore easily

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understand the language used in 1814 by the Archduke John to the Empress Marie-Louise at Vienna, when this Austrian prince, alluding to King Charles, his wife and Godoy, then refugees at Verona, assured her that he was going to behold, in this last mentioned city, 'a very celebrated *menagerie* !'*

The Empress Josephine brought into play all her graces and seductive arts to console Prince Ferdinand's mother, and to lessen, as far as it lay in her power, the bitterness of the fate which was in store for this aged royal couple. She won especially the queen's heart, by continually showing her the most touching attentions. Josephine succeeded also in interesting and amusing the queen by giving her lessons in the French art of dressing. She obtained for her the good offices of her famous hairdresser, Duplan, which delighted the Spanish queen, whose childish turn of mind was wonderfully adapted for such occupations and who enjoyed these frivolities.

We cannot undertake here the task of relating the ins and outs of the Bayonne melodrama, which only concerns Josephine very indirectly, and ended, as we know, in the ephemeral appropriation of the throne of Philip II by King Joseph Bonaparte. The removal to France of the princes of the Spanish Bourbon dynasty was the immediate consequence of this. On the day before Napoleon's birthday, the 14th August, the emperor and empress re-entered St Cloud. They were both returning in a less cheerful mood than that

* *Ménage*, household; a play upon words not apparent in the English.

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in which they had left for Bayonne : Napoleon very annoyed at the disastrous affair of Baylen, news of which he had heard en route—Josephine grieved at the occupation of Rome by the French troops and at the regrettable attitude adopted by her husband towards the venerable Pius VII.

Up to this time no dark cloud had arisen to obscure Napoleon's star. From the close of this year 1808 the glorious stages of his career still remaining to be traversed were to be interspersed with reverses and secret troubles. At a later period at St Helena, he was destined to regret his mistakes, the war with Spain, the persecution inflicted on the Pope, and, finally his abandonment of Josephine. Before the interview of Erfurt, which was being arranged for the month of October, there had never been any serious question of this abandonment. At Erfurt on the contrary the ideas of divorce, which from time to time had crossed Napoleon's mind, and which, like a '*leit-motif*,' were continually re-appearing, assumed a much more serious and permanent character. Napoleon had wished to sound Alexander's inclinations before committing himself to the perilous enterprise of which the crown of Spain was to be the object. At Erfurt the relations between the sovereign of France and the Russian autocrat were of a very intimate nature. 'This increased intimacy,' writes M. Aubenas, 'was far from agreeable to the Empress Josephine, for it was supposed to be, and this she knew, the harbinger of a union between the emperor and a Russian princess.' M. de Méneval declares

indeed that the Emperor Alexander offered his powerful ally, at Erfurt, the hand of the Princess Anne, his sister, and adds that Napoleon contented himself with listening to the proposal without making any positive reply. This is probably true enough; indeed these ambitious views grew apace at Erfurt and the idea of a divorce was making headway in his mind, but he had not yet decided to carry out the scheme.*

Napoleon on leaving Erfurt only passed through Paris, as it were, on his way to Spain, and shortly afterwards made his entry into Madrid. Whether it was presentiment or an intuitive apprehension of the risk that the emperor was running in this precarious adventure, Josephine had watched his departure with misgiving. Contrary to her habitual reserve, when warlike operations were under consideration, the empress is said on this occasion to have begged her husband to set some limit to the boundless series of his military enterprises. She had lost her former confidence in the invincibility of the conqueror of Europe, and she dreaded the future. Would not the other powers, hostile to France though subdued for the moment, take advantage of his absence at the extremity of the continent and his embarrassments in Spain to avenge their previous defeats?

Josephine's correspondence with her husband probably contained traces of these fears, for Napoleon wrote her on the 9th January 1809 :

‘Moustache † brings me a letter from you of 31st

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii, p. 434.

† Name of one of the emperor's couriers.

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December. I see, my dearest, that you are sad and full of very gloomy forebodings. Austria will not declare war. If she does, I have a hundred and fifty thousand men in Germany and the same number on the Rhine, besides four hundred thousand Germans to reply to her challenge. Russia will not desert me. People are mad in Paris. Everything is progressing favourably. I shall be in Paris as soon as I find it desirable. I advise you to beware of nightly visitants.* Some fine day at two o'clock in the morning . . . But good-bye, my dearest, I am quite well and remain yours affectionately.'

Josephine's presentiments and fears, however, had not deceived her. Austria was making fresh preparations for war and was increasing her armaments. She was soon to take off her mask and to invade Bavaria, thus provoking the celebrated campaign of 1809.

Napoleon, informed of this hostile attitude and of the sinister designs of his old enemy, re-entered Paris precipitately on the 23rd January and, in two months' time, had completed his preparations for war. He left towards the middle of April to rejoin his headquarters in Germany, leaving the empress, whom he had taken with him, at Strasburg.

Josephine waited impatiently at Strasburg during this campaign and her anxieties continued to increase. On the 7th of May she wrote from this city to the emperor's secretary :

'I regret, my dear Menneval (*sic*), I have been unable to tell you before this how grateful I am for your

* A play upon words. *Revenants* = ghosts, or, persons returning.

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attention in giving me news of the emperor so often. I have to thank your regularity in writing for any peace of mind I possess. Several days have passed, however, without my receiving any news from headquarters. . .

‘Goodbye, my dear Menneval (*sic*), and my very kindest regards.

‘JOSEPHINE.’

The empress had been disturbed and alarmed at the report which had been spread regarding the wound Napoleon had received at the siege of Ratisbon.

To re-assure her the latter addressed her the following note, dated the 6th of May :

‘My dearest, I have received your letter. The bullet which hit me has not wounded me ; it hardly grazed the Achilles’ tendon. I am in capital health ; you are wrong to be anxious. My affairs are prospering. Yours affectionately.’

After the capture of Vienna and the arrival on the Danube of Prince Eugène’s army, Napoleon, in a letter dated 27th May, gave Josephine an account of the occurrences of the war :

‘I write you a few lines to inform you that Eugène has rejoined me with his whole army, has perfectly accomplished the object I wished him to achieve, and has almost entirely destroyed the army which was opposed to him. I send you my proclamation to the army of Italy, which will explain everything to you. I am very well. Yours affectionately.

‘P.S.—You can have this proclamation printed

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at Strasburg and translated into French and German, so that it can be distributed throughout Germany. Enclose a copy of the proclamation with the translation that goes to Paris.'

On the 31st of May the emperor communicated to the empress the news of the death of Marshal Lannes, who had been killed at Essling, in the following terms :

' The loss of the Duke of Montebello, who died this morning, has distressed me exceedingly. Such is the end of everything ! Good-bye, my dearest. If you can help to console his poor wife, please do so. Yours affectionately.'

The empress was at this juncture preparing to leave Strasburg to go and take the waters at Plombières, and on the 7th June she wrote the following letter to the emperor's secretary :

' Strasburg, 7th June 1809.

' I propose, my dear Méneval, to leave for Plombières on Monday, the 12th of this month. While I am taking the waters there, I shall be still further from news than I am here. I depend on your usual promptitude not to leave me ignorant of anything that may be of interest to me. You may continue to address your letters to Strasburg ; the postmaster will re-direct them to me at Plombières. Your wife intends also to take the same waters, which I am very glad of, as she is a very charming companion. Goodbye, my dear Méneval, and my very kindest regards.

' JOSEPHINE.'

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Josephine's son, placed by Napoleon in command of the army destined to operate in Italy, distinguished himself particularly in the course of this campaign. He soon penetrated right into Hungary, where he gained important victories over the Austrians. His mother was justly proud of his successes and received the following lines on the subject from the emperor :

‘I send you a few lines to tell you that on the 14th of June, the anniversary of Marengo, Eugène won a battle against the Archduke John and the Archduke Palatine at Raab in Hungary ; he captured three thousand men, several cannon and four flags, and pursued the enemy for a considerable distance on the road to Buda.’

Three weeks later Napoleon ended, by the decisive victory of Wagram, this war which had been provoked by the Cabinet of Vienna. On the 7th of July, at five o'clock in the morning, he announced this great achievement to the empress :

‘I send you these lines to give you the good news of the victory of Ebersdorf, which I won on the 5th, and that of Wagram which I gained on the 6th. The enemy's army is flying in disorder and everything is progressing in accordance with my wishes. Eugène is in excellent health. Prince Aldobrandini has been wounded, but only slightly. Bessières has had a bullet in the thick part of his thigh ; the wound is very slight. Lasalle has been killed. My losses are pretty heavy, but the victory is decisive and complete. We have more than a hundred cannon, twelve flags, and a great number of prisoners. I am very sunburnt.

Goodbye, my dearest, I embrace you. Kindest regards to Hortense.'

On the 9th of July, at two o'clock in the morning, Napoleon completes his account of these operations by a very short note :

'Everything here is going on just as I could wish, my dearest. My enemies are defeated, beaten, completely routed. Their numbers were large, but I have crushed them.'

Following on an armistice concluded on 13th July, the negotiations set on foot with a view to the conclusion of peace were prolonged for about three months, which Napoleon passed at Schönbrunn or at Vienna.

All this time the Empress Josephine, sad and preoccupied as in 1807, had been living in retirement at Malmaison since her return from Strasburg and Plombières.* The news which reached her from Vienna was hardly of a reassuring character. Napoleon's attempted assassination by a German student named Staaps had given her a great shock. Méneval, the emperor's secretary, writes as follows about this attempt :

'It is highly probable that the signature of peace was hastened by an event which considerably disturbed

* In a letter, dated 28th September 1809, Méneval, writing from Schönbrunn to his wife, expresses his astonishment at a rumour which she had heard while staying with the Empress Josephine, and which she had lately communicated to her husband. According to what was reported in the empress' entourage, Prince Eugène was about to be proclaimed King of Poland, and Josephine, it seems, was inclined to believe the report, which was not based on any serious foundation.

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Napoleon's equanimity, although he tried not to show it. One day in October, at Schönbrunn, while the troops were marching past the emperor at the mid-day parade, a young man tried to approach him. He held in his hand a paper which was thought to be a petition. Instructed to hand it to General Rapp, the aide-de-camp on duty, he replied that he wished to speak to Napoleon; in spite of repeated rebuffs, he continually returned to the charge. This insistence appeared suspicious; his quiet but decided manner, the expression of his eyes, his right hand which he kept concealed in his breast—all these indications struck General Rapp, who had him arrested and brought to the castle. All this happened without anyone noticing it. It was soon known that a large kitchen knife had been found on the young man, who was a student of Erfurt university, named Staaps, only eighteen years of age. When questioned as to what he proposed doing with the knife, he did not conceal the fact that his intention had been to kill Napoleon.'*

The dangers of all sorts which menaced the emperor's life naturally led to ideas of divorce again becoming prevalent. Napoleon knew this and did not lose sight, as far as he was concerned, of the necessity of consolidating the empire he had founded by a new marriage. He was unwilling that the question of the succession should, as in the case of Alexander the Great, become the signal for the downfall of this majestic edifice and in view of this

* Méneval, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Napoléon I*, vol. ii, p. 256.

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he deemed it essential that he should acquire a direct heir to his throne.

As soon as the treaty of peace with Austria had been signed, the emperor, before returning to France, visited Munich, from which city he addressed to Josephine the following laconic epistle :

‘My dear Josephine, I am leaving in an hour. I shall arrive at Fontainebleau on the 26th or 27th ; you can betake yourself there with some ladies-in-waiting.

‘NAPOLÉON.’

The emperor arrived at Fontainebleau on the 26th October at nine in the morning, and not finding Josephine, who had not anticipated that he would be back so soon, made her absence a reason for an exhibition of ill temper.

CHAPTER XIV

THE *History of the Consulate and the Empire* by M. Thiers is interesting to consult on this question of the divorce, which has engaged the attention of so many historians. This remarkable work may serve as a guide to us in retracing the various phases of the transaction, for, although these are well-known, we could hardly pass them over in silence, when we reflect what an important place this period of her divorce occupies in the history of the Empress Josephine.

Napoleon had arrived, as we have seen, at Fontainebleau on the 26th of October, before his household, before the empress, before his ministers, before everybody. Only Cambacérès, the High Chancellor, with whom the emperor had desired an interview, had reached the palace at daybreak, before the Sovereign's arrival. The latter engaged at once in a long conversation with his most valued counsellor on all the interesting topics of the moment. At length the question of the divorce was broached. Napoleon really loved Josephine and it cost him a great deal to separate from her. The idea of con-

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solidating a throne, which he often felt trembling under the pressure of his greatness, had become an obsession. Josephine's husband now desired at all costs an undisputed heir who should put an end to all the rivalries, intrigues and convulsions to which the eventuality of his death might give rise. The emperor on this occasion did full and complete justice to Prince Eugène's loyalty, his good qualities, his modesty and his unbounded devotion. He desired to await the viceroy's arrival, Cambacérès having declined any mission of this nature, with a view to his preparing Josephine for the painful ordeal of a separation which had become necessary. Till then Napoleon expected that no one should make the slightest allusion to the matter in the empress' presence; the most rigid secrecy regarding the project was to be scrupulously observed. Cambacérès, who was sincerely attached to Josephine, learned this serious resolve with regret. Napoleon's old counsellor understood perfectly that in separating from her the emperor was about to break with the whole of his past. He told himself that Napoleon, instead of remaining the popular ruler, inheritor and defender of the healthy ideas and wise principles of the Revolution, would displease a whole legion of functionaries, military and civil, who would look forward with but little enthusiasm to the impending re-establishment of a purely aristocratic sovereignty.

Although Prince Cambacérès has mentioned in his writings that in the course of this interview Napoleon seemed to be chiefly taken up with his own greatness,

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and appeared as it were to be '*striding up and down in the midst of his glory*,' the High Chancellor dared nevertheless to formulate certain arguments destined to raise doubts in his master's mind as to the expediency of a divorce. Josephine, according to him, was popular, and the military chiefs especially were attached by long established custom to their general's consort, who for many years past had been in the habit of doing them numerous services. All those who came in contact with her had learned to appreciate, in various circumstances, her benevolence and extreme kindness. On the other hand, to seek a fresh union with a princess born on the steps of a throne, whether that of Germany or of Russia, was to approach perhaps more closely than was advisable to the *ancien régime*. The choice, which would have to be made in the family of one or the other of the sovereigns of these great States, would become, for the one whose alliance Napoleon might appear to be disdainful, a subject for displeasure or even for rancour. Such were, or probably were, the arguments used by Cambacérès against the advisability of a divorce : but the attempt to influence Napoleon's decision was a vain one and he preferred to close the discussion.

Josephine, as we have had the opportunity of observing, had long been expecting the painful ordeal which awaited her ; but, in spite of the feverish anxiety which this menace, hanging over her head, had caused her on several occasions, she always consoled herself with the hope that the evil day would be indefinitely

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postponed, or might perhaps be avoided altogether. There is always the tendency to believe that what one wishes for will come to pass !

The empress' perplexities and sorrows had however become intensified. She foresaw, with that peculiarly delicate and subtle perception which belongs to the feminine nature, and before any really disquieting word had been pronounced, that the critical hour was at hand and her fate about to be decided. Her daughter Hortense, who shared her anxiety, had hastened to her mother's side to cheer and comfort her ; like Josephine, she had a presentiment, though unwilling as yet to believe it, of the catastrophe of which her mother was to become the victim.

On the 14th of November Napoleon returned from Fontainebleau to Paris, where he made his entry on horseback. His resolve to separate from Josephine was irrevocably fixed. He only awaited Prince Eugène's arrival to tell him everything ; but he meant to couch the deed of divorce in the most affectionate terms, and the most honourable for the Empress Josephine. As M. Thiers has said, he would hear of nothing which could in any way resemble a *repudiation* and would only admit a simple dissolution of the conjugal tie based on mutual consent, a consent itself based on the interests of the Empire.*

'When Napoleon had decided, on his return to Fontainebleau at the end of 1809,' writes his private secretary in his *Mémoires*, 'to take in hand this grave matter (of the divorce), he gave the empress some

* Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*.

hints as to the separation that he was contemplating, a few weeks before the painful sacrifice would have to be consummated. This he did without explaining himself distinctly, and rather by innuendos calculated to make her reflect than by any explicit remarks. Napoleon, whom many have looked upon as merciless, feared the sight of tears and suffering, which indeed exercised an almost irresistible influence over him. I have often seen him, after scenes of jealousy caused by Josephine's always anxious affection, so disturbed in mind that he remained for hours, half reclining on the sofa in his study, a prey to silent emotion and unable to resume his work.*

As the reader knows, the empress only arrived at Fontainebleau some hours after her husband. 'This want of punctuality,' says Bausset, the chamberlain of the palace, 'occasioned somewhat of a scene, Napoleon reproaching her for her conduct.' 'The empress,' however, adds M. Aubenas, 'appeared so happy at seeing him again, that he resumed his affectionate tone, though unable or rather unwilling to disguise from her that his mind was engrossed with other thoughts. Josephine experienced from this moment a heart-sinking which was a presentiment of the danger that threatened her. During the first days of their joint life at Fontainebleau other symptoms contributed to alarm her tender heart.' †

'An unwonted coldness'; writes Napoleon's private secretary, who knew his master's plans, 'the

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. ii, p. 284.

† Aubenas, vol. i, p. 451.

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closing of the communications which had up till now remained open between their apartments ; the rarity and briefness of the moments which the emperor vouchsafed to her ; some passing storms, though provoked by the slightest pretexts, which troubled this usually peaceable household ; the arrival in succession of the allied sovereigns, whose presence she sought in vain to interpret : all these things caused the Empress Josephine the liveliest apprehensions. In her excessive absorption of mind she came continually to consult me. I could only give her evasive answers. My rôle was becoming embarrassing, and in order to escape her questions I was obliged to keep out of her way. But these persevering efforts of mine to avoid what I can only term her morbid attacks seemed to her more significant than words. Her anxiety reached its highest pitch. She did not dare to broach this burning question, when she obtained a moment's speech with the emperor, for fear he might pronounce the fatal verdict. This state of affairs was too acute to last long ; it had introduced into their daily intercourse a constraint which was a torment to them both.*

This painful state of affairs could not, indeed, be prolonged indefinitely, and Napoleon pronounced the fatal words which were to put an end to it before the commencement of December 1809.

‘A few days before,’ M. de Lavalette relates, ‘the emperor had summoned me. He was anxious that a friend of the empress should render less bitter the cup which was to be presented to her ; his thoughts

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. ii, p. 287.

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turned to me : “The nation,” he said, “has done so much for me, that I owe it the sacrifice of my dearest affections. Eugène is not young enough to allow of my regarding him as my successor : I am not old enough not to hope to have children, and yet I cannot hope to have any from her ; the peace of France requires that I should choose another consort. For some months past the empress has been living in the torments of uncertainty. All arrangements have been completed for a new alliance. You are her niece’s husband ; she honours you with her esteem ; will you take it upon you to announce this sad news to her and to prepare her for her new destiny ?”’ *

Lavalette proved just as unwilling as Cambacérès to undertake this most painful of all missions ; he adds however that the emperor did not take his refusal amiss. Another person, whose name Napoleon’s ex-aide-de-camp abstains from mentioning, is supposed to have been invited by the emperor to do this disagreeable service for him, but we have reason to think that this is to be viewed rather as an hypothesis than as an established fact.

The fateful day arrived at last ; it was, says M. Aubenas, Thursday, the 30th November 1809. Napoleon’s private secretary gives the following account of the occurrence :

‘At last the emperor could hold out no longer, and one evening after an unusually melancholy and silent repast he broke the ice.’ According to Michaud’s *Biography*,

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. ii, p. 287.

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an historical work of genuine worth and well supported by documentary evidence, the dialogue between Napoleon and Josephine took place, after the emperor had dismissed all the persons present, as follows :

“Josephine, my dear Josephine, you know how I have loved you! It has been to you, and to you alone, I have owed the only moments of happiness I have tasted in this world. . . . Josephine, my destiny is stronger than my will. My dearest affections must be silent in face of the interests of France.” —“Say no more,” Josephine had the strength to reply, “I expected this, I understand you, but the blow nevertheless is a mortal one.” “I could say no more,” Josephine afterwards declared. “I do not know what took place within me. I think I must have screamed. I thought I had lost my reason for ever; I fainted away and when I recovered consciousness I found myself in my room.”* Napoleon had to carry the unhappy Josephine there, with the help of Bausset, the chamberlain of the palace, and of the usher, keeper of the state papers. Moved to tears, Napoleon murmured something in justification of the necessity of this fatal divorce, which had become a stern and imperative duty. These words were overheard and placed on record by Bausset, who was present and, unexpectedly, had to play an active part in this scene. We think it interesting to borrow from his *Mémoires* the circumstantial and complete narrative of this dramatic evening :

‘Their Majesties sat down to table. Josephine was

* *Biographie*, Michaud.

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wearing a large white hat, tied under the chin, which hid part of her face. I thought, however, I could see she had been crying and that she still had difficulty in repressing her tears. She looked the image of sorrow and despair. The most profound silence reigned during dinner ; they only partook for form's sake of the dishes that were presented to them. The only words uttered were when Napoleon said to me : "What sort of weather is it ?" While speaking he rose from the table. Josephine followed slowly. Coffee was served and Napoleon helped himself to his cup, which was held by the page in attendance, and made a sign that he wished to be alone. I left the room quickly, but I was uneasy, troubled in mind and a prey to sad thoughts. In the ante-room, which ordinarily served as dining-room for their Majesties, I sat down in an armchair near the door of the emperor's drawing-room ; I was mechanically watching the servants who were removing the dishes from their Majesties' dinner table, when suddenly I heard loud screams, uttered by the Empress Josephine, issuing from the emperor's drawing-room. The usher of the room, thinking she was ill, was on the point of opening the door ; I prevented him, remarking that the emperor would call for assistance if he thought it advisable. I was standing near the door when Napoleon opened it himself, and, seeing me, said sharply to me : "Come in, Bausset, and shut the door." I entered the room and perceived the empress lying full length on the carpet, and uttering heartrending cries and lamentations. "No, I shall never survive it,"

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the unfortunate woman was saying. Napoleon addressed me : "Are you strong enough to lift Josephine and carry her to her room, by the inside stair communicating with her apartments, so that she may receive the nursing and assistance her condition requires ?" I obeyed and raised her from the ground, thinking she was suffering from an attack of nerves. With Napoleon's help I took her in my arms, while he himself took a candle from the table, held the light for me, and opened the door of the drawing-room, from which a dark passage led to the small staircase of which he had spoken to me. On reaching the first step of this stair, I observed to Napoleon that it was too narrow to allow of my descending without danger of falling. He at once called the keeper of the state papers, who was placed day and night at one of the doors of his study, opening on the landing of this small staircase. Napoleon handed him the candle, which we hardly needed as these passages were already lighted. He ordered the keeper to go on in front, and held Josephine's legs himself so as to help me to descend more carefully. But every moment I expected my sword would trip me up, and that we should all fall together ; luckily we got down without accident and set our precious burden down on an ottoman in the bedroom. The emperor went at once to the bellrope and summoned the empress' ladies-in-waiting. When I had come to the empress' assistance in the drawing-room above, she had at once ceased her lamentations ; I then thought she was ill, but at the moment that I was in difficulties with my

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sword, half-way down the small stair I have spoken of, I came to a different conclusion. I was obliged, in order to prevent a fall, which would have been disastrous to the actors in this painful scene, to grasp her more firmly, seeing that there had been no opportunity of carefully arranging our respective positions beforehand. I was holding the empress in my arms, which were round her waist, while her back was supported on my chest and her head leant against my right shoulder. When she felt the efforts I was making to prevent myself falling, she whispered to me : “You are holding me too fast,” and I then saw I had nothing to fear for her health, and that she had not lost consciousness for an instant. During the whole of this scene I had only thought of Josephine, whose condition distressed me. I had been unable to observe Napoleon ; but when the ladies-in-waiting had come to the empress’ aid, Napoleon betook himself to a small sitting-room which was next to the bedroom, and I followed him. His agitation and discomposure were extreme. In his trouble he informed me of the cause of everything which had just occurred, and spoke to me as follows : “The interests of France and of my dynasty have done violence to my affections . . . divorce has become a stern duty for me . . . I am the more grieved at the scene which Josephine has just made . . . that she must have known from Hortense three days ago . . . the unfortunate necessity which condemns me to separate from her . . . I pity her from the bottom of my heart, but I thought she had more character . . . and I was not prepared for such an outburst of grief.” . . .

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‘Indeed the emotion which mastered him forced him to make a long pause to recover his breath between each sentence he uttered. The words came with difficulty and without coherence; his voice was tremulous and inarticulate, and his eyes were wet with tears. The truth is he must have been really distracted to give so many details to me, who was so far removed from his counsels and his confidence. The whole scene did not last more than seven or eight minutes.’* . . .

Queen Hortense, always full of devotion to her mother, hastened to her side and lavished her tenderest care and sympathy upon her. They mingled their tears, and the unfortunate Josephine gradually recovered a certain degree of serenity and resignation. Napoleon himself, unable to bear the sight of Josephine’s tears, also showered on her all sorts of attentions and tokens of his regard.

* Bausset, *Mémoires anecdotiques sur l’intérieur du Palais Impérial*, vol. i, pp. 370, 371, 372.

CHAPTER XV

ALTHOUGH Josephine partially regained her composure during the following days, sustained as she was by her daughter's exquisite tenderness and sympathy, and by the affectionate attentions now lavished on her by Napoleon, she nevertheless awaited with impatience the arrival of her son Eugène. The latter, warned by the emperor's orders of the painful mission to his mother he would have to undertake, had addressed the following letter to Napoleon :

‘My mother and I must shew the world a noble example of courage and resignation in this matter. Such an example I shall give ; this is all I can say and is surely all you can demand from me. A respectful son and obedient subject, I shall never forget that you are my Emperor and my father.’

Calmer and more master of himself than his sister Hortense, who had not hesitated after the scene of 30th November to reproach Napoleon for his ingratitude, Prince Eugène was nevertheless profoundly affected by these events. So long as he had not arrived, so long as Josephine could still entertain even the faintest hope that she might be spared from drinking

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the cup that was being presented to her, she still trusted she might be able to avoid her fate. In the midst of the lamentations which her sorrow drew from her, she was often heard to exclaim : "I cannot let myself be sacrificed without an attempt to escape from this cruel fate !"

When Prince Eugène reached Paris from Milan on the 9th December, the rumour of what had just happened at the Tuileries had already spread among the public. In a conversation with the emperor, Josephine is said to have declared that she did not regret the loss of her throne, for she had always regretted having ascended it, but her sole grief was in the prospect of being separated from the emperor. The latter is said to have replied : "Do not try to move me ; I love you always. Politics have no heart, they have only a head. I will give you five millions a year and a kingdom, with Rome as your capital." It is curious to remark that Rome always suggested itself to Napoleon's mind when he was anxious to give a signal proof of affection to any one who was specially dear to him. Later on, it was his son whom he proclaimed King of Rome. But just as the morrow and the future belong only to the Almighty, as Victor Hugo has so well expressed it in his beautiful lines, so Rome can belong to none but the successor of St Peter. In any case, Josephine cared nothing for any kingdom, least of all for that of Italy ; nothing would induce her to leave France.

Several sovereigns had come to Paris to celebrate the anniversary of the Coronation ceremony. One

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would have thought that Napoleon was anxious that some crowned heads should sanction the solemn act of divorce by their presence. A gala banquet took place at the Tuileries on the 3rd of December, before Prince Eugène's arrival. Girardin, in his *Souvenirs*, has described the appearance of the imperial couple as follows :

‘The emperor was in full dress, with a *Henry IV* hat, which he kept on his head. His face had a worried expression and he ate more than usual. The empress was richly dressed ; her complexion was dazzling, thanks to Isabey's brush, and she wore a melancholy air.’ Constant, in his *Mémoires*, adds that during this evening Josephine seemed more dejected than she did in the morning. The following day, the 4th December, she appeared again in public, and for the last time enacted her rôle of empress at a fête given in honour of their Majesties by Count Frochot, prefect of the Seine, at the Hotel de Ville. Mme. d'Abrantès, who was present at this fête, has eloquently described in her *Mémoires* the effect which this last appearance of the Empress Josephine had on the guests :

‘We ascended to the Throne room,’ relates Mme. d'Abrantès, ‘and had hardly seated ourselves when the roll of drums was heard and the empress arrived. Never shall I forget her appearance in that beautiful gown which she wore with such an exquisite grace. Never will the expression visible on her face, that face always so sweet but on this occasion overcast with the dark shadow of sorrow, be effaced from my



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memory. When she approached the throne, on which she was about to seat herself, perhaps for the last time, in full view of the public of the great city, her steps faltered and her eyes filled with tears. I tried to meet the gaze of those beautiful eyes. I would have liked to fall at her feet and tell her how much I was suffering. She understood me and threw me the most sorrowful glance her eyes had ever cast, perhaps, since her crown, now robbed of its roses, had been placed on her head. It told of many a grief, that glance, it unveiled many a sorrow. . . . She must have felt as if she were dying ; and yet she smiled. Oh ! the tortures of a crown !'

Prince Eugène, as we have said, arrived in Paris on the 9th of December. His sister, Queen Hortense, had gone to meet him. Let us see how Josephine's dearly loved daughter conveyed the news to her brother : 'I met him at Nemours,' she writes, 'and there I informed him that the emperor's divorce had been decided upon ; a tremendous sacrifice which my mother was making for her husband's happiness and for that of France. It was her children's duty to follow her example, and with the same disinterested patriotism my brother renounced the throne of Italy, which had been guaranteed to him if the emperor had no children, and I the throne of France, to which, under the same circumstances, my sons were the sole heirs.'*

Strange caprice of destiny ! It was not this much

* Fragmentary extracts from the unpublished memoirs of the Duchess of Saint Leu, (*Mémoires de tous*).

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wished for son, born to Napoleon in 1811, who was to be his father's successor, but a grandson of Josephine's, who, more than half a century later, was to wear the imperial diadem! Providence thus frustrated the objects of the divorce.

On the arrival of Prince Eugène at his mother's side, she informed him of the imminence of the divorce. As soon as he came into Napoleon's presence, Josephine's son addressed him with the words: "Sire, permit me to leave your service. . . ." "What!" exclaimed Napoleon.—"Yes, Sire, the son of her, who is no longer empress, cannot remain viceroy; I shall follow my mother into her retirement."—"You want to leave me, Eugène? . . . *you!* . . . Ah! do you not know how imperious the reasons are, which force me to take such a step? . . . And if I do get this son, this object of my most fervent desires, this son who is a necessity to me, who will be his guardian in my stead when I am gone? Who will be a father to him if I die? Who will educate and make a man of him?" Napoleon had tears in his eyes while pronouncing these words.*

Three days previously, on the 6th December, if we are to believe Michaud's biography, Josephine had written Napoleon a letter which ended as follows:

'Oh! how wrong you are to act as you are doing! Why do you not reflect on the delights, in that future which so absorbs your thoughts, of intimate converse with a consort of your own rank, your own age,

* Michaud's *Biographie*.

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who can defer to your tastes and your habits, and who, herself and through her children, belongs to your family ; who has succeeded in living on peaceable terms with your mother and your sisters ; before whom you can speak of the past without embarrassment ; who understands your slightest word ? Will you find these advantages with a wife who is a stranger to your family, whom she has perhaps already learned to look upon with disdain ; who will only wish to see in you the Emperor Napoleon and the General Bonaparte ; who, being ignorant of the varied circumstances of your life, will always be a stranger to you ?— Everything, even her accent, will deprive you of the charm of intimacy. You will cherish your recollections without daring to confide them to her, and there will be words that you will be ashamed to use in her presence, because they will be of disagreeable import to her.’

Cambacérès, who remained Josephine’s faithful confidant after her downfall, had been deputed to hand this letter to Napoleon. The latter, with a look of genuine vexation, exclaimed, it is said : “ Josephine writing to me ! . . . Oh ! *Mon Dieu*, what is the use ? My resolve is taken ; I am rendering her unhappy ; I know it, but she may be assured that I sacrificed myself before I sacrificed her.” After reading her letter the emperor added :

“ Tell Josephine I will answer her ; tell her I consider her the most excellent of women ; she is better than I am, I protest ; she is an angel. I am amazed at my own courage in abandoning her, but it

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is a necessity—you know it is. . . . Try to make her understand that it is so.”

An hour later the empress received a letter from Napoleon, in which frankness was the dominant note, although mingled with an accent of real feeling. He wrote :

‘ . . . I am not remarrying for my own sake ; I am endeavouring to consolidate the Empire I have founded. Your son cannot succeed me to the detriment of my nephews, and would France be willing to accept them as her masters ? . . . What would happen at my death ? Terrible dissensions, the partition of Alexander’s Empire, civil war. . . . I know you to be a better woman than you even know yourself ; I appreciate you at your true value. . . . *You are without reproach*, and I should be without excuse, were I not emperor at the same time as your husband. Try and resign yourself ; look upon our divorce from its honourable side, associate yourself with this act of abnegation of mine ; be, in leaving me, the noblest among the mothers of my people. . . . ’*

This letter, in which Napoleon pays such a brilliant tribute to his first wife’s qualities, should give cause for reflection to her detractors. The words : *You are without reproach*, which the emperor addresses to Josephine, seem to us to refute many slanders and calumnies uttered against the memory of the latter, unless one accepts the theory that Napoleon had resigned himself to be either the blindest or the most accommodating of husbands !

* Michaud’s *Biographie*.

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Cambacérés, the intimate confidant of both husband and wife, remained, up to the last moment, almost alone in deprecating the divorce ; Josephine said she esteemed him highly because he had never flattered her and had always told her the truth. Napoleon's first wife did not like flatterers ; for this reason she did not care for Talleyrand, who was always obsequious in the presence of authority. The Empress Josephine was sincere and loved sincerity. She became the dupe of Fouché because he knew how to mask his knavery under a show of blunt sincerity.

According to Michaud's *Biography*, which contains such curious particulars as to Napoleon's relations with Josephine and her children during the period of the divorce, M. de Narbonne was one of the principal advocates of the measure. He is even credited with having done his best to bring it about, in spite of the fact that he owed Napoleon's favour, in the first instance, to Josephine's protection and recommendation. He was perhaps the person to whom M. de Lavalette alludes as having been entrusted by the emperor, in view of his own refusal, with the disagreeable mission of preparing the empress for the terrible calamity which was in store for her? . . . However this may be, Cambacérés received the emperor's command to arrange with the ecclesiastical authorities for a dissolution of the religious tie. The reader will doubtless remember the nuptial benediction which had been clandestinely given to Napoleon and Josephine by Cardinal Fesch on the eve of the coronation. The principal arguments adduced in favour of the annulment of this act were the unreality

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of the emperor's consent and the absence of the parish priest. Thanks to these two causes of nullity, Cambacérés succeeded, after some arduous negotiations, in obtaining the dissolution of the religious marriage from the diocesan authorities. As regards the civil tie, nothing was easier to dissolve, divorce being allowed by the legislation of this period. The Pope's intervention was therefore unnecessary, a fortunate circumstance for Napoleon, seeing that he was at this time, as is known, not on the best of terms with the Holy See.*

In the meantime negotiations had been opened with the Russian Court, through diplomatic channels, to ascertain whether the Emperor of Russia was still as favourably inclined as he had been at Erfurt, to grant Napoleon the hand of his sister, the Grand Duchess Anne. These negotiations had been unduly protracted and had exhausted the patience of the sovereign of France : he now turned to Austria, whose favorable disposition was evident. The famous minister Metternich had just reached the height of his power and had obtained the most absolute ascendancy over his master, Francis II. Metternich, who had become premier in the place of M. de Stadion, had been familiar, during his residence in Paris as ambassador, with all the notabilities of the court of

* The reader is referred to the interesting and circumstantial account, given in a book by Mons. Henri Welschinger entitled *le Divorce de Napoléon* (1889), of all the very curious negotiations which preceded the dissolution of the religious tie by the ecclesiastical authorities of Paris. Space unfortunately does not permit of our reproducing the account of them here.

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the Tuileries, and was secretly ambitious to supersede the Russian diplomacy in Napoleon's sympathies and to inaugurate his ministry by the latter's marriage with an archduchess of Austria. Schwartzberg, the Austrian ambassador, who was apprized of the views entertained by his court, was equally desirous to promote the alliance. The underground workings of the Austrian emissaries did not fail to accomplish their object. 'In the imperial family,' writes M. Thiers, 'the whole of the Beauharnais family was in favour of Austria, and on a question which should never have elicited on their part an opinion of any sort, they hastened to form one and to express it with a strange eagerness. Their real motive was the desire for a durable peace in Italy and in Bavaria, a matter of the greatest importance for Prince Eugène and his father-in-law. Although Prince Eugène was not destined to occupy the throne of Italy if Napoleon had a direct heir, still he was called to govern this kingdom in the capacity of Viceroy during Napoleon's life, that is to say, for twenty or thirty years (this was then expected to be the duration of Napoleon's reign and life), and he was anxious that the country should not be exposed, as it was in the last war, to seeing the Austrians at Verona. Josephine, who found some compensation for her downfall in the ardour with which she endeavoured to serve her children's interests, had made the most indiscreet overtures on this subject to Mme. de Metternich, who had not left Paris.'*

* Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, vol. xi, p. 365-366.

been decided on, had asked the emperor for the throne of Italy on her son's behalf, a request which Prince Eugène had begged his mother not to make to the emperor again ; the viceroy did not wish to appear to be receiving an indemnification for the Empress Josephine's calamity. The latter, as M. Aubenas remarks, her sacrifice once accomplished, 'had turned her thoughts exclusively to the position of her children, and the loss of rank and honours, which she looked upon with indifference as far as she herself was concerned, became a matter for sorrowful regret when she considered those dear to her.'

It was perhaps with the purpose of serving the interests of Prince Eugène and of her family that Josephine, after her divorce, considered it necessary to favour, as far as her influence went, the emperor's marriage with an Austrian princess. We have found evidence of her intervention in favour of an alliance with Austria in a passage in M. Thiers' book which we have quoted above. M. de Saint-Amand, in his work: *The last years of the Empress Josephine*, has given publicity to this strange episode : Napoleon's first wife actively participating in the matrimonial negotiations undertaken with the object of fixing her husband's choice on a new wife !

Metternich, eagerly endeavouring at this period to constitute himself the promoter and zealous champion of Napoleon's union with an archduchess, sought in every quarter, both at the Court and in Paris, for influential auxiliaries, capable of furthering his views. To have the Empress Josephine and her children as

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allies in such a delicate affair was a surprising stroke of good fortune for this minister. Metternich kept up an active correspondence with his wife, who, as we have seen, had remained in Paris. According to M. de Saint-Amand, two obstacles engaged the attention of the Austrian minister at the outset. The first, the most insurmountable, that of religion, seemed to have disappeared since the annulment of Napoleon's religious marriage. The other, which referred to obtaining the consent of the Archduchess Marie-Louise, hardly seemed a serious one in the view of the Vienna Cabinet. One can easily understand that, with the idea he had of his omnipotence at the Austrian Court, Metternich flattered himself that he could easily surmount this little difficulty. He was moreover certain of the cordial assent of his sovereign to a projected marriage which was ardently desired by the Austrian Government, a marriage from which the Emperor Francis as well as his chief minister expected to derive advantages and profits.

A third obstacle had still to be overcome, and this was the most dangerous of all: namely, Napoleon's inclination and that of several of his advisers for the Russian alliance. This indeed was the rival influence which Metternich—aided by the Empress Josephine (!)—was endeavouring at all costs to conquer.

CHAPTER XVI

IT was on the 15th of December 1809, one of the most painful days of the Empress Josephine's existence, that the ceremony of the public pronouncement of the divorce took place at the Tuileries. The High Chancellor Cambacérès proceeded to the palace, accompanied by Count Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély, to fulfil the functions of registrar to the imperial household. The persons present were : The Emperor, the Empress Josephine, the Emperor's mother, the King and Queen of Holland, the King and Queen of Westphalia, the King and Queen of Naples, the Prince Viceroy and Princess Pauline Borghèse. This is how M. Aubenas, Josephine's most reliable historian, describes this pathetic ceremony :

Napoleon, standing with his hand in that of the empress, those two hands which were about to be parted for ever, read the following speech, one full of dignity and tenderness, in a voice trembling with an emotion which was betrayed all the more by his efforts to steady it.

“My cousin, Prince High Chancellor, I sent you a sealed letter of to-day's date, to command you

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to appear in my cabinet, in order to acquaint you with the resolve that I and the empress, my dear spouse, have taken. I am glad that the kings, queens, and princesses, my brothers and sisters, my brother-in-law and sisters-in-law, my step-daughter and my step-son, who has become my son by adoption, as well as my mother, are present to listen to what I have to communicate to you.

“The political necessities of my monarchy and the interests and well-being of my peoples, which have constantly guided all my actions, require that after I am gone I should leave to children inheriting my love for my peoples that throne on which Providence has placed me. And yet for several years past I have lost all hope of having children from my marriage with my beloved wife, the Empress Josephine ; this is what prompts me to sacrifice my heart’s tenderest affections, to regard only the good of the State, and to desire the dissolution of our marriage.

“Having only reached the age of forty years, I can hope to live long enough to bring up the children which it may please Providence to give me, to participate in my thoughts and my ideas. God knows how much such a resolve has cost me ; but there is no sacrifice which I will not dare to face, once it is proved to me to be for the well-being of France.

“I cannot refrain from adding that far from my ever having had to complain, I have on the contrary had every reason to praise the attachment and affection of my beloved consort. She has enriched fifteen years of my life ; the remembrance of this will always remain

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engraved on my heart. She was crowned by my hand ; it is my will that she retain the rank and title of empress, but above all that she shall never doubt my feelings for her, and that she shall consider me always as her best and her dearest friend.”

When he had reached the point where, with a tender glance fixed on his partner, he recalled in poetic language the happiness that Josephine had given him during these past fifteen years (those years which later on he was to count as the happiest of his life), tears came to Napoleon’s eyes, and he ended his discourse a prey to deep emotion.

It was now Josephine’s turn. She commenced reading the declaration which had been prepared for her :

“With the permission of our august consort,” she said, “I wish to state that, as I no longer cherish the hope of having children who might satisfy the requirements of his political aims and the interests of France, it is my pleasure to give him the greatest proof of attachment and devotion that the world has ever known. . . .”

These words had been pronounced with difficulty by the unfortunate Josephine, whose emotion increased the further she proceeded with reading the speech that had been prepared for her. Before half of it had been read she burst into tears, and Cambacèrès informs us that in the midst of her sobs, she was heard to exclaim : “You see before you a very miserable woman. . . . I am losing all the peace of my life. I shall soon die. This divorce is killing me. . . . Let them do what

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they like, I will submit to everything.”* Incapable of proceeding with her task the wretched woman handed the paper to Count Regnault de Saint Jean-d’Angély, who read the remainder of the speech in her stead, while himself unable to disguise his emotion :

“I owe everything to his kindness ; it was from his hands that I received the crown, and as occupant of the throne on which he placed me I have received abundant testimony of the love and affection of the French people.

“I imagine that I am paying a due regard to all these sentiments in consenting to the dissolution of a marriage which henceforward is an obstacle to the welfare of France, which deprives her of the happiness of being one day governed by the descendants of a great man, so clearly raised up by Providence to efface the evils of a terrible revolution, and to re-establish the altar, the throne, and the social order. But the dissolution of my marriage will in no wise alter the feelings of my heart ; the emperor will always find in me his best friend. I know how deeply this act, demanded by political necessity and important interests, has grieved his heart ; but we are both proud of the sacrifice we are making for the good of our country.” †

* Michaud’s *Biographie*.

† While this memorable ceremony was taking place, a dreadful storm broke over Paris. Torrents of rain, accompanied by terrific wind squalls, created universal dismay ; it might be thought that the Heavens wished to mark their displeasure at the act which destroyed Josephine’s happiness.—At Milan, the usual residence of her son the viceroy, the same phenomenon occurred on the same day and at the same hour.

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Prince Eugène and Queen Hortense evinced, in these trying circumstances, a nobility of feeling and a dignity beyond all praise ; their devotion was admirable. They upheld their mother's courage, and united with a tender solicitude for her the dutiful bearing they owed to their adopted father.*

The melancholy ceremony of the divorce was ended, and Josephine, overcome by grief, had descended again to her apartments. 'The emperor,' writes his private secretary, 're-entered his study, sad and silent ; he threw himself on the sofa, where he usually sat, in a state of profound dejection. He remained there for a short space, his head resting on his hands, and when he rose again, he looked distracted. The orders for his departure to Trianon had been given in advance. When it was announced that the carriages were waiting Napoleon took his hat and said to me: "Méneval, come with me." I followed him by the small winding staircase which communicated between his study and the empress' apartment. She was alone and seemed absorbed in the most sorrowful reflections. When she heard us enter, she rose quickly and sobbing threw her arms round the emperor's neck ; he pressed her to his breast and embraced her repeatedly, but in the excess of her emotion she had fainted. I rang promptly for assistance. The emperor, wishing to avoid the renewed spectacle of a grief which it was not in his power to alleviate, placed the empress in my arms as soon as he saw she was coming to herself, charged me not to leave her, and retired quickly by

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. ii.

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the public rooms on the ground floor, at the door of which his carriage was waiting. Josephine perceived at once that the emperor was gone. The attendants who had entered placed her on a sofa, where they gave her the assistance she required. In her distress she had seized my hands, earnestly charging me to tell the emperor not to forget her, and to assure him that her attachment would survive every eventuality. She made me promise to give him news of her on my arrival at Trianon, and to see that he wrote to her. She was loth to let me go, as if my departure would sever the last bond which linked her still to Napoleon. I left her, touched by such unfeigned grief and so sincere an attachment ; it weighed heavily on my mind during my whole journey, and I could not refrain from deploring the stern exigencies of a statecraft which violently ruptured the bonds of this tried affection, in order to impose another union whose consequences could not be foreseen.

‘On my arrival at Trianon I informed the emperor of what had taken place after his departure and gave the messages with which I had been entrusted. Still under the impression of the scenes of the day, Napoleon enlarged on Josephine’s good qualities and the sincerity of her feelings for him. He looked upon her as a devoted friend, and has always retained a most affectionate remembrance of her ; a letter was despatched—the same evening—to console her in her solitude. Hearing from those who went to visit her at Malmaison that she was sad and often in tears, he wrote her again to complain tenderly of her want of

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courage and to tell her all the grief that it caused him.'*

The Empress Josephine, accompanied by her daughter, hastened to start for Malmaison, that retreat full of tender recollections for her, and quitted the Tuileries, the palace which had been fatal to so many crowned heads, and where she was destined never to return.

The Senate paid a last public tribute to Josephine by voting the following address to her :

‘Your imperial and royal majesty has just made the greatest of all sacrifices for France : history will always preserve the memory of it.

‘The august consort of the greatest of monarchs could not have associated herself to his undying glory by a more heroic act of devotion.

‘For long, Madame, the French people has revered your virtues ; it loves that touching kindness which inspires all your words, as it is the mainspring of all your actions ; it will always admire your sublime devotion ; it will ever accord to your imperial and royal majesty the tribute of gratitude, respect and love.’

According to the same author, the emperor came and paid a visit to the empress the day after their separation and walked with her alone for a long time in the gardens of Malmaison. They both looked with emotion on all these spots which reminded them of their past life, from which they were now divided by an abyss. On his arrival and on leaving Josephine,

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. ii, pp. 293-294.

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Napoleon shook hands with her in a friendly way, but without embracing her, and this gave her a painful shock ; he had ceased to be her husband and was now no more than her friend. But he exhibited such a warm friendship that he left her more composed than he found her. He had hardly returned to Trianon, when he felt he must write to her to raise her courage. The heading of the letter shews that it was written at eight o'clock in the evening ; it is in a tender strain and recalls the happiest period of their union :

‘My dear Josephine, I found you to-day weaker than you ought to be. You have shewn courage and you must continue to find more courage to sustain you ; you must not let yourself become a prey to a gloomy melancholy : you must be contented and above all take care of your health, which is so precious to me. If you are attached to me and if you love me, you should be brave and resolutely happy. You cannot doubt my constant and tender friendship, and you little understand all I feel for you, if you think I can be happy if you are not happy, and contented unless you are resigned. Goodbye, my dear Josephine ; sleep well and dream that this is my will.

‘NAPOLEON.’

M. Aubenas further states that, every day during the month that followed the declaration of the divorce, a visit from Napoleon or a letter from him came to console the Empress Josephine. He adds that she required longer than this to recover her spirits after such a terrible ordeal. On seeing this continuance

of the emperor's regard, all those courtiers who took their cue from the sentiments of their master flocked to Malmaison. It must however in fairness be admitted that a great number of visitors came there impelled by more disinterested and honourable motives.

‘They were anxious to give the Empress Josephine a mark of affection, which with most of them was also a token of their gratitude, and during the earlier days, when there was still no *gêne* caused by the presence of a new empress, every one of note in the nation made it their duty to offer their homage at Malmaison. Josephine was not insensible to these demonstrations ; but she only derived consolation from the signs she received that the emperor had not forgotten her.’*

Napoleon, far from neglecting Josephine, often came to visit her and interested himself greatly, as is proved by the letters he addressed to her,† in her health, in her means of amusement, and in the maintenance of her household in comfort and luxury. He endeavoured also to give her good advice and to console her in her perpetual grief. He wrote her one evening :

‘I have received your letter, my dear Josephine ; Savary tells me you are always crying ; that is not as it should be. I hope you will have been able to take a walk to-day. I have sent you some game. I will come and see you when I hear from you that you are becoming reasonable and that your courage is gaining

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii, p. 483-484.

† Twenty-three letters from Napoleon to Josephine. (Didot collection.)

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the upper hand. Goodbye, my dear Josephine, I am sad too to-day ; I long to know that you are satisfied and to learn that you are recovering your self-possession. Sleep well.'

On another occasion in December, Napoleon sent Josephine this short note :

‘*Trianon, Tuesday.*

‘My dear Josephine, yesterday after you left I went to bed. I am going to Paris. I want to hear that you are cheerful. I shall come and see you during the week. I have received your letters and shall read them in the carriage.’

On Monday the 25th of December, before he left Trianon, the emperor invited the empress and her daughter Hortense to dine with him. The repast was a sad and silent one, and Josephine’s emotion affected Napoleon himself.

‘Business brought the emperor back to Paris,’ writes his private secretary in his *Mémoires*, ‘and he was astonished to find the palace, no longer enlivened by the Empress Josephine’s presence, so solitary. He often felt the want of the domestic life to which he was accustomed, and this void was not always filled by the cares of government, which were multiplied by his growing activity and by a foresight which neglected nothing.’

The day after the melancholy dinner at Trianon, on the 26th of December, Napoleon wrote to poor Josephine :

‘I was very pained when I saw the Tuileries again ;

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this great palace seemed empty to me, and I found myself lonely there.' Four days later he wrote: 'I am sad at not seeing you; good-bye till to-morrow.' And a little later, the emperor answered Josephine, who had expressed her regret that his visits were now at longer intervals:

'I am very anxious to come to Malmaison, but you must be brave and calm; the page who came this morning says he saw you crying. I am going to dine alone. Good-bye, my dear Josephine, never doubt my feelings for you; this would be unjust and wrong.'

But the whole of the happy past, which was recalled to Josephine's recollection by her stay at Malmaison, only revived sad thoughts and painful comparisons in her mind. She therefore succeeded only imperfectly in playing her part in the irreparable sacrifice, which she had accomplished in the first instance with so much dignity and resignation.

The emperor, indeed, wrote to her on the 17th of January 1810:

'My dear Josephine, d'Audenarde, whom I sent you this morning, tells me that your strength of mind has deserted you since you went to Malmaison. And yet this spot must speak to you of our feelings for each other, which should not and cannot ever change, at least as far as I am concerned. I am longing to see you, but I must be sure that you are strong and not weak. I myself am rather weak, and it is an extremely painful sensation. Good-bye, Josephine, good-night. Were you to doubt me you would be very ungrateful.'

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Josephine, alarmed perhaps at the rumours which were being spread in her neighbourhood, which made her fear that plans were possibly on foot to make her leave France, had written to the emperor for his permission to come and live in Paris. Napoleon replied at once on the 30th January, to put an end to her unfounded apprehensions: 'I shall be pleased that you come to the Elysée, and shall be very glad to see you oftener, as you know how much I love you.' The following day in a second letter, he expressed his meaning still more explicitly:

'I hear you are making yourself nervous,' he wrote: 'this is not right. You do not place confidence in me and are concerned about all the rumours that are spread; this shows you do not know me, Josephine. This grieves me, and unless I hear that you are cheerful and contented, I shall have to scold you severely.'

Another letter from Napoleon to Josephine, written a few days after the one we have just quoted, came to reassure his forsaken wife:

'I have told Eugène,' he wrote, 'that you preferred to listen to the gossips of a large city than to what I said to you, and that people must not be allowed to trouble you with ridiculous tales. I have had your things brought to the Elysée. You must often come to Paris; but be calm and contented, and have perfect confidence in me.'

A little later when the new empress arrived in France, Josephine understood, with her usual tact, the

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propriety of going away, but she would on no account have it thought that her departure was not voluntary. In fact, after spending a few weeks in Paris, Josephine decided of her own accord to leave in April for her Chateau of Navarre.

CHAPTER XVII

THE Chateau of Navarre had for long been uninhabited and was in a state of dilapidation by no means comfortable for a person accustomed like Josephine to all the refinements of the luxurious and well arranged establishments she had occupied for so many years. She thought at this time of going either to Plombières or to Aix in Savoy to take a long course of the waters. But before this, tortured by continually recurring misgivings, and always pursued by the idea that the emperor, to gratify the Empress Marie-Louise, would find himself compelled to send his first wife away from France, Josephine became the prey of a thousand disquieting conjectures. All sorts of indiscreet comments from various quarters reached her ears, even in the retirement of her sombre Chateau of Navarre, with more or less fanciful tales about the delights of the imperial honeymoon. She listened to these nevertheless with an eager and painful curiosity, though unwilling, in spite of the tortures of jealousy, to resign herself to the loss of the place she still meant to retain in Napoleon's heart and memory.

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We do not know whether the following letter, addressed by Méneval, the emperor's secretary, to his wife, and dated 28th March 1810, had been communicated to the Empress Josephine. This letter, as the reader will see, gave an account of the arrival of Marie-Louise at Compiègne, in these terms :

‘She (Marie-Louise) has been received in the palace by thirty young ladies of the town, one of whom complimented her and presented flowers to her. The weather was wretched and it was so late that there was no formal entry. This little ovation did not amount to much. The empress retired at once to her apartments, supped with the emperor and the Queen of Naples, and went to bed without seeing anyone. She was rather tired, having travelled forty-five leagues yesterday. In my opinion she is a very beautiful woman. She has rather large features, but in spite of these being somewhat wanting in regularity, the general effect is very pleasing. Her whole bearing exhibits a combination of openness and nobility. She is tall, with a superb figure, a beautiful complexion and a fresh colour. On the whole she is very handsome, and when a few months have elapsed, will be the most beautiful woman at court, both as regards her figure and her deportment. She was not greatly embarrassed on her arrival at receiving all these compliments. She was slightly agitated, but without being the least awkward. She seems to possess a great deal of tact and wit. Her letters to the emperor are charming ; she used to write

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him pretty long ones every day, and they were very well expressed. I think she is just the wife to suit the emperor. He seemed very pleased to give her his hand.' *

If the Empress Josephine saw the letter we have just reproduced, the last sentence especially cannot but have made a very sad impression on her.

Prince Eugène had asked the emperor, in his mother's name, whether he would have any objection to her returning to Malmaison, pending the completion of the improvements and repairs which Josephine had ordered to be carried out at Navarre. Napoleon had approved the plan, and had directed his stepson to inform his mother to this effect. Josephine, relieved from serious misgivings, hastened to send the emperor the following letter :

‘Navarre, 19th April 1810.

‘Sire—I have received from my son the assurance that your majesty consents to my return to Malmaison, and is pleased to grant me the advances I asked in order to render the Chateau of Navarre inhabitable. This double favour, sire, dissipates to a large extent the misgivings and even the fears, with which your majesty's long silence had inspired me. I was afraid I had been banished entirely from your remembrance; I see this is not the case. I am therefore less unhappy to-day, and even as happy as it is henceforward possible for me to be.

‘I shall go to Malmaison at the end of the

* Letter addressed to the Baroness de Méneval by her husband (not published).

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month, as Your Majesty sees no objection to my doing so. But I must tell you, Sire, that I should not so soon have taken advantage of the liberty that Your Majesty grants me in this matter, were it not that the house at Navarre requires urgent repairs both for the sake of my own health and for that of the members of my household. My intention is to remain quite a short time at Malmaison ; I shall soon leave it to take the waters. But, while I am at Malmaison, Your Majesty may be sure that I shall live there as if I were a thousand leagues from Paris. I have made a great sacrifice, Sire, and every day I feel more and more the full extent of it. Nevertheless, the sacrifice will be what it ought to be ; it will be a complete one as far as I am concerned. Your Majesty will not be troubled in his happiness by any expression of my regrets.

‘I shall pray incessantly that Your Majesty may be happy, perhaps I may even pray that I may see him again ; but let Your Majesty be assured, I shall always respect the new situation in which he finds himself, and I shall respect it in silence ; confident as to the feelings which Your Majesty entertained towards me in days gone by, I shall not attempt to elicit any fresh proof of them now ; I shall expect everything from your sense of justice and your kind heart.

‘I confine myself to asking Your Majesty one favour, namely, that you will yourself deign to find some way of convincing me occasionally, as well as those around me, that I have always still a small place in your remembrance, and a large place in your esteem

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and your friendship. This way, whatever it may be, will alleviate my sorrow, without, it seems to me, compromising in any way—and this is the chief consideration—Your Majesty's happiness.

‘JOSEPHINE.’

The Emperor's reply.

Compiègne, 21st April 1810.

‘My dear Josephine, I have received your letter of 19th April. It is not in good taste. I am always the same ; men of my calibre never alter. I do not know what Eugène can have said to you. I have not written to you because you have not written to me, and because I only desired what might be agreeable to you.

‘It gives me pleasure that you should go to Malmaison, and that you are glad to go there ; for my part I shall be glad to hear your news and to give you mine. I shall not say more till you have compared this letter with yours, and, after you have done so, I leave you to judge who is the better friend, you or I—Good-bye, my dear Josephine ; take care of yourself, and be just to yourself and to me.

‘NAPOLEON.’

Josephine, whose melancholy was profound, experienced an unspeakable feeling of relief on receipt of the foregoing letter. This is abundantly clear if one reads the following reply which she hastened to send to its writer :

‘A thousand tender thanks that you have not forgotten me. My son has just brought me your

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letter. With what eagerness I read it! And yet I took a long time over it, for there was not a word in it that did not make me cry; but these tears were very sweet! My heart has recovered its peace again, and this peace will never leave me; there are some feelings which are life itself and which can only end with life.

‘I should be desperate if I thought that my letter of the 19th had displeased you. I do not exactly recollect the expressions I used, but I know the very painful feeling that dictated it; it was the grief I felt at having no news from you. I had written you when I left Malmaison, and, since then, how many times I should have liked to write you! But I felt the reasons for your silence and I feared a letter from me might annoy you. Yours has been balm to me. May you be happy, as perfectly happy as you deserve to be; it is from the bottom of my heart that I utter this wish. You too have just given me my share of happiness, a share very keenly appreciated; I value nothing so much as a proof that you remember me.

‘Goodbye, Napoleon; I thank you as tenderly as I shall always love you.

‘JOSEPHINE.’

In the first days of May the Empress Josephine returned to Malmaison, while the emperor and his new consort visited the northern departments of the Empire. In her favourite residence she held a court, where the etiquette observed was the same as that at the Tuileries. The emperor had desired that she should continue to receive the Court officials,

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the great dignitaries and the principal authorities ; it was even a matter of satisfaction to him that people should frequently pay their respects at Malmaison.

During his journey in the northern provinces Napoleon wrote to Josephine : ' I am very anxious to see you. If you are at Malmaison at the end of the month, I shall come and see you. . . . Never doubt my feelings for you ; they will last as long as I live ; you would be very unjust to me if you doubted them.'

The emperor kept his word, says M. Aubenas, but surrounded his movements with unaccustomed mystery, in order to spare the feelings of his new consort. Josephine herself tells Queen Hortense, who had followed her husband to Holland, the story of this visit :

' I had yesterday (13th June) a day of happiness ; the emperor came to see me. His presence made me happy although it renewed my grief. This emotion is of a kind that one would wish to feel often. All the time he remained with me, I had courage enough to restrain the tears which I felt were ready to flow ; but after he left I could not restrain them and I was very miserable. He was very good and affectionate to me as usual, and I hope he will have read in my heart all the tenderness and the devotion which I feel for him.'*

To rid Josephine of her melancholy, Napoleon advised her to visit a watering place, and she left at the end of July for Aix in Savoy. After the season

* Aubenas, vol. ii, p. 513.

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there was over she wished to go to Switzerland, which she had never seen, but on her arrival at Geneva, some ill advised intelligence which reached her from Paris made her fear that the emperor wanted her to leave France. She commissioned her daughter Queen Hortense to come to an understanding with him confidentially about the matter. The emperor, who was not at all of this way of thinking, and was only anxious to procure Josephine some entertainment, hastened to write and reassure her. He encouraged her to go and see the Viceroy at Milan, but left her the choice between this journey and returning to Navarre, as he wished her to have the final decision as to what suited her best. Josephine, under the influence of the fear which had taken hold of her, gave up her journey to Switzerland, and hastened to return to Navarre, where she spent the remainder of the year 1810 and the greater part of 1811. It was only in 1812 that she proceeded to Milan to assist at her daughter-in-law's confinement.*

In one of her letters to her daughter Hortense, Josephine writes: 'If the emperor asks for news of me, tell him that my only occupation is thinking of him.' These feelings of genuine attachment continued, in the case of Napoleon's first wife, to the end of her days; how much she differed in this respect from his second wife!

After taking the waters at Aix in Savoy, Josephine took a fancy to visit Geneva, where she stayed for some time. She travelled under the name of Countess

* Méneval, vol. ii, p. 362, *Mémoires* (published by Dentu, 1894).

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d'Arberg, which was that of her lady-in-waiting. Her son, Prince Eugène, and her daughter-in-law, who had come from Milan to spend a few days with the empress, accompanied her. Josephine resided at the Hotel d'Angleterre at Sécherons, a village situated near Geneva on the margin of the lake. The empress travelled as simply as a private person. Those who had the opportunity of coming in contact with her at this period, in the course of this little excursion, found her looking much better than at Malmaison.

'She had grown stouter,' writes Mlle. Ducrest in her *Mémoires*, 'but her figure had lost nothing of its exquisite perfection ; her complexion was fresher and not so sunburnt, and the inexpressible charm of her manners, the pleasing *timbre* of her voice still made her the most fascinating of women.'*

The dethroned empress received on all sides and from all political parties without distinction the most sympathetic reception. She was treated with the most respectful deference, and was profoundly touched at the way she was welcomed wherever she went. 'It makes me all the happier,' she said, 'because Frenchmen are especially fond of youth and beauty, and for a long time past, I, alas, have possessed neither the one nor the other. . . .'

A fête took place on the lake at Geneva on the 12th of August, during the Empress Josephine's stay, and numerous craft, decked with flags in the most elaborate and tasteful manner, glided over the blue

* G. Ducrest, *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*. (Barba edition.)

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waters. Bands of musicians, distributed among the fleet of small boats, filled the air with their melodious strains; and finally, on the approach of night, a magnificent display of fireworks ended the rejoicings of this happy day. Mlle. Ducrest also relates that a barque had been specially decorated for the empress' use. The other craft crowded round her boat, but when orders were about to be given that they should keep at a greater distance, her Majesty commanded that they should be allowed to approach. "I am very glad," she is reported to have said, "that people can see how enthusiastic I am about all my surroundings, and how delighted I am with my reception. It is so consoling to be loved."

People repeated her words over and over again, and shouts of "Long live the Empress! Long live the Viceroy!" resounded on all sides round the empress' boat.

Geneva society had experienced the charm of her sweetness. Those who had enjoyed the privilege of meeting and conversing with her were never tired of praising her superlative distinction of manner and the extent of the information she had acquired since she became Napoleon's wife. She had herself said that, in order to become the worthy consort of a hero, she had applied herself to increasing her knowledge and perfecting her artistic acquirements. In any case the charm of her conversation during her stay in Geneva agreeably surprised more than one celebrity reputed to be a good judge in such matters. The poor were remembered by Josephine here, as everywhere else. In the



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midst of the bustle of the festivities, not less than in the quiet of her retreat at Navarre, the unfortunate were always cared for with the inexhaustible benevolence which characterised the 'good empress.'*

Josephine, however, not receiving a reply as promptly as she expected from Queen Hortense, whom she had asked to sound Napoleon as to her proposed return to France, became at last very uneasy at her silence. In her over-excited imagination she became the victim of the gravest misgivings on this score, and on the 12th October she wrote to her daughter :

'The Duke of Cadore's courier, who is returning to France, has come to ask if I have any letters to send. I take advantage of this opportunity, my dear Hortense, to tell you how very anxious I have been. Not a word from you during the whole of the twenty days you have been away from me. What does your silence mean? I confess that I am lost in all sorts of conjectures and do not know what to think. You alone, my dear daughter, can relieve me from the uncertainty in which I am living. If within the next three days I do not receive letters advising me what to

* When the Empress Josephine passed through Lausanne in the month of October, M. de Budé relates, in his interesting work, *Les Bonaparte en Suisse*, that Madame de Staël made an effort to be admitted to an interview with Josephine. The latter, however, in spite of her desire to see that gifted and celebrated woman, did not dare to receive her for fear of displeasing Napoleon. 'I know Madame de Staël too well,' she said to her reader, Mlle. Avrillon, 'to risk such an interview. In the first work that she publishes she will not fail to report our conversation, and she would make me say things that I had never thought of.'

Josephine purchased at this period the chateau of Prégny near the lake of Geneva.

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do . . . I will return to Malmaison ; then at least I shall be in France ; and if everyone abandons me, I shall live there alone in the consciousness that I have sacrificed my happiness for that of others.'

Fortunately, says M. Aubenas, she received next day a letter from the queen, telling her that the emperor left her entirely free to do what she liked best, to remain in Switzerland, to go to Italy, or to return to Navarre, without even making an exception of Malmaison.* His old affection had carried the day above all other considerations, and seeing the pain that Josephine experienced at the mere idea of being sent away, Napoleon had not the courage to give his new consort this much coveted satisfaction. In writing to her mother Queen Hortense had given her all the assurances for which she so eagerly longed as to the emperor's continued regard for her : 'All that you tell me,' she replied, 'with regard to the interest that the emperor still continues to take in me, gives me pleasure. I have made the greatest of all sacrifices, my heart's affections, for his sake ; I am sure he will not forget me, if he sometimes reminds himself that another would never have had the courage to sacrifice herself so utterly. . . . I confess that if I had to leave France for more than a month, I would die of grief.'

Soon afterwards the Empress Josephine received from Napoleon himself the confirmation of what the

* 'It was an auspicious day for us and above all for the empress,' writes Mlle. Avrillon, 'when we saw the courier enter the courtyard at Sécheron, bearing the permission to go and spend the winter at Navarre. The whole household was in ecstasy and the preparations for our departure were soon completed.'

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queen had written her ; he recommended her, however, a little later on, and by way of change of scene, to take a trip to Italy and visit her son and daughter-in-law. At the same time he left her perfect liberty of action :

‘I would advise you to go to Navarre at once,’ he wrote her, ‘if I were not afraid that you would find it dull there. It is my opinion that you can only spend the winter comfortably either at Milan or at Navarre ; after that I approve any decision you may come to, as I do not want to restrict you in any way. Good-bye, my dear Josephine, try and be contented and dismiss your fears ; never doubt my regard for you.’ In this letter, adds M. Aubenas, the emperor confirmed to her the news that the empress was *enceinte*, of which the report had even reached Switzerland, and as to which Josephine, to put him at his ease, had been the first to write him. On receipt of the emperor’s letter Josephine decided to leave at once for Navarre. ‘There, at least,’ she wrote to her daughter, ‘I shall be in France. If it had only been a question of spending one or two months in Italy with my dear Eugène, I would willingly have undertaken the journey, but to leave France for a period of six months would disturb all who hold me dear and would be more than I could stand. You will find me much altered, my dear daughter ; I have lost all the good effects of the waters. During the last month I have become considerably thinner, and I feel that I need rest, and require above all that the emperor should not forget me.’ *

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'Impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN the month of November 1810 Josephine returned to Navarre. She had had important works carried out and had restored this country seat to its ancient splendour. Mme. Ducrest's *Mémoires* inform us that Josephine, while careful to avoid introducing any innovations which would be in bad taste, had plantations laid out, marshes drained, and outhouses built. In this way she was able to give the country people enough occupation to cause the conditions of poverty, which prevailed in the district before she came there, to disappear. Amongst other improvements the roads in the beautiful forest of Evreux, which had been impassable before her arrival at Navarre, became by her care, wide and pleasant highways. Everything in short changed its aspect from the time that her Majesty became proprietress of the ancient domain of the princes of Bouillon.

At Navarre Josephine was the object of respectful homage on the part of the inhabitants of Evreux, whom she received with her habitual courtesy. Several landed proprietors from the neighbourhood prized the honour of being permitted to pay their court to

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her. Mme. Ducrest mentions, among others, the Abbé of Saint-Albin, a natural son, as it was said, of the Duke of Orleans. Her Majesty, says the author of the *Mémoires* above referred to, was fond of conversing with the Abbé of Saint-Albin about the Duchess of Orleans and her daughter, in whom she felt the liveliest interest. Josephine took measures to ascertain whether the pension accorded by the imperial government to these unfortunate princesses was paid with regularity, and even wrote, when this was necessary, to the proper quarter, with a view to expediting the remittance of the arrears of their pension. It was by such means that Josephine made herself generally loved, and it is on account of many traits of this nature that she will be cited in future generations as a model among sovereigns. Party spirit never prevented her from relieving the unfortunate, and she maintained that all Frenchmen had a right to her benevolence. The empress refused to recognize any as her enemies until she had exhausted all the influence she possessed in trying to do them services.

The life the Empress Josephine led at Navarre, where she resided during the last months of 1810, and a great part of the year 1811, was that of a real sovereign. The Countess d'Arberg had been appointed by Napoleon, in succession to the Duchess de la Rochefoucauld, as lady-in-waiting to the ex-empress. The emperor, in giving Countess d'Arberg this post of confidence, knew that his choice would be greatly to Josephine's advantage. The new

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lady-in-waiting was a clever and kind-hearted woman, as devoted to the empress' person as she was to the supervision of her material interests. Mme. d'Arberg was able thus to put Her Majesty's household on an orderly footing, and to prevent the waste and disorder, of which Josephine was unfortunately the too easy-going victim. During the empress' periods of residence at Navarre, her birthday was solemnly celebrated at Evreux, whose bishop, Monseigneur Bourlier, was the constant guest at the table of the illustrious hostess of the chateau. The worthy bishop often joined Josephine in her game of backgammon ; he was an amiable old man, accustomed to refined manners, and whose agreeable society was appreciated by all the inhabitants of Navarre. The poor of the bishop's diocese benefited largely, it appears, from the frequent visits he paid the empress, for it seems certain that he received annually from her hands a hundred thousand francs for his charitable objects.

On Sundays Mass was said in the chapel of the castle by Monseigneur de Barral, Archbishop of Tours, and the empress' principal chaplain. In spite of the reforms effected by the Countess d'Arberg with a view to preventing as far as possible * unnecessary extravagance in Josephine's household, visitors could still

* During the residence at Navarre, the emperor wrote to Madame d'Arberg, recommending order and regularity : ' Reflect that this household has only recently been organised. The Empress Josephine had no debts seven months ago. Give to her affairs, Madame, the supervision of a friend, in whom she and I have every confidence.' (Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Salons de Paris*, v. 204.)

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notice an extraordinary magnificence and a princely luxury.

Mme. Ducrest, who on certain occasions was Josephine's guest at Navarre, gives some interesting details regarding her retinue :

'The empress,' she writes, 'had behind her at table two valets, one Basque running-footman, a chasseur and a head butler. The dinner-service was usually of plate ; at dessert only the plates were of porcelain, painted with fruits and flowers. On occasions of great ceremony a magnificent Sèvres service was used, a present given by the emperor subsequent to the divorce ; the gold épergne had been presented by the city of Paris on the coronation day, as well as a toilet-table and a tea-table, which Her Majesty had kept at Malmaison. She decided as to the two persons who were to sit next to her ; the Viceroy and the Queen of Holland did the same when they were present, and so also did Madame d'Arberg ; with these exceptions every one sat as they liked.

'Lunch lasted about three quarters of an hour ; the company returned afterwards to the gallery which served as a drawing-room. The empress worked at a beautiful piece of tapestry, the ladies at various sorts of embroidery, the men amused themselves with drawing, while a chamberlain on duty read aloud the latest novels, travels and memoirs. It was there that I heard Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire* read ; the book proved so interesting to every one that it was subsequently read a second time.

'When the weather was fine carriage drives were

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indulged in ; at two o'clock we were taken in barouches with four horses and postillions *à la Daumont* through the beautiful forest of Evreux or its neighbourhood. Her Majesty always desired Mme. d'Arberg, a lady-in-waiting, and one of her guests to accompany her in her own carriage. The rest of the household found places in the two other carriages. The equerry on duty in uniform rode next to the carriage-door to the empress' right, an officer of cuirassiers next to the other door, while a small escort of this regiment followed the barouche.

'The empress, annoyed at the etiquette which compelled these gentlemen to don their uniforms whenever she went outside the precincts of the park, thought she might dispense with the formality. She allowed the equerry and the chamberlain on duty to accompany her in dress coats, and ordered the escort not to follow her except on occasions of ceremony. The emperor was informed of this decision, how I do not know ; he wrote at once a somewhat stiffly worded letter to Countess d'Arberg, in which he said that it should be remembered that the empress had been *crowned*, that everything should go on at a distance from the Tuileries as if she were still there, that he had forgotten to appoint pages when forming her household, and that he was going to name twelve (which he did shortly afterwards), that he forbade the wearing of the dress coat, and that to allow it was to be wanting in proper respect to Her Majesty. Full uniform with sword and cocked hat had again to be worn, much to the annoyance of the gentlemen concerned.'

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When the Duchess of Montebello, in speaking of Napoleon, called him *Monsieur Etiquette*, it must be admitted that this nickname was deserved !

After dinner the empress played piquet, backgammon or casino. She chose her partners herself, and when playing with guests did not do so for stakes ; the points were three francs if she were playing with her usual company. As has been mentioned, Monseigneur Bourlier often played backgammon with the empress.

‘ At eleven o’clock, ’ Mme. Ducrest relates further, ‘ the party betook themselves to a small drawing-room where tea was laid. After this meal the guests retired ; the empress stayed for another hour playing patience and chatting with us. It was from these conversations that one was best able to judge of the extent of her information and the kindness of her disposition ; she cast aside all reserve. Sometimes she would suddenly stop in the middle of an interesting story, saying that everything she was telling us would be repeated to the emperor ; a very unpleasant reflection for her, as one may imagine. He knew indeed word for word everything that was said in these private conversations. ’ *

Among the sayings attributed to Josephine by Mme. Ducrest, there is one which deserves to be mentioned and which the empress need not have feared to have repeated to Napoleon :

‘ When she ascended the throne she had bestowed much thought, she said, on the question of how she

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*.

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could become worthy of her high estate, as she feared the emperor would be blamed if she did not worthily fulfil her mission. "I was sincerely anxious," she added, "to bring a blessing on his reign, and I used my best efforts to forget myself and to think only of others."

The divorce had produced generally speaking a very bad impression on the public mind. Benevolence and amiability are indeed the two qualities most appreciated by the populace and those which render sovereigns beloved.

It was principally Prince Eugène's arrival at Navarre which brought animation and gaiety into his mother's somewhat isolated existence. The male guests, according to Mme. Ducrest, 'were sure to find the interest of the conversation heightened by curious tales and authentic narratives relating to the glorious battles in which he had taken an active part. The ladies were delighted at the enjoyable expeditions he organised with chivalrous politeness for their amusement, and with the innumerable little gifts which he presented to them with a grace which doubled their value.'

Thus was the time passed at Navarre. For the amusement of the younger folks in the empress' entourage small lotteries, simple balls or rather dances were organised by Josephine or by the members of her little court. This court was composed, without counting the chaplain and the lady-in-waiting, of nine ladies of the Palace, Mmes. de Rémusat, Walsh-Serrant, Colbert, Octave de Ségur, de Turenne,

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d'Audenarde, de Viel-Castel, de Lastic and Watier Saint-Alphonse, with whom was associated Mlle. de Mackau. There was one knight of honour, M. de Beaumont; four chamberlains, MM. de Turpin-Crisse, de Viel-Castel, de Montholon and de Lastic; one principal equerry: M. de Monaco; MM. de Chaumont-Quiltry, d'Andlau and de Pourtalès, equeries; one reader, Mme. Gazzani. The empress' private secretary was M. Deschamps.

New Year's day of the year 1811 brought to the chateau of Navarre a quite unaccustomed activity and excitement. The whole of the Imperial household, the members of the empress' court as well as of her domestic establishment, gathered in the guard-room to present her their homage and good wishes. Bouquets and congratulations were offered her, and Josephine with her usual graciousness distributed kind words and gifts to everybody. During the afternoon the authorities of the town of Evreux and of the Department came to pay their respects to the empress and delivered speeches in her honour. The civil functionaries had donned their gala uniforms and the officers their full dress.

Josephine's greatest happiness was to have her two children near her. Prince Eugène, as we have seen, delighted all the inhabitants of Navarre by his gaiety and high spirits. He was a good musician, sang well, and organised pleasure parties. Under his direction the guests went fishing in the ponds; when it rained they played billiards. Prince Eugène adored his mother

and spoke of the time of the empress' divorce as the most dreadful moment of his life. Queen Hortense, who had had many troubles, was of a less joyous disposition than her brother. Her state of health was also not very flourishing. She was the devoted companion, comforter and support of her mother. 'When Queen Hortense was not suffering,' says Mme. Ducrest, 'she often consented to sing some of her songs ; the ones she preferred were *Griselidis* and *Partant pour la Syrie*. She was good enough to explain to me how they should be sung. Her voice was pleasing, though not of great compass, and she put a great deal of expression into the words. I saw less of her than of the viceroy ; she remained a great deal in her own apartment, followed rather a strict treatment, and retired early. She could not deviate from her *regime* without suffering severe pain ; it was indeed to have an opportunity of resting that she paid these visits to her mother.'*

The day was now at hand when the birth of an heir was about to fulfil the emperor's dearest wishes. Some days before this great event Napoleon had written to Josephine : 'I hope to have a boy. I will let you know at once.' The good Empress Josephine, once her painful sacrifice had been accomplished, took the liveliest interest in the news that was sent her, and eagerly wished for the realisation of the hopes of the man whose stormy destiny she had shared for so long a period.

On the 20th March 1811, in the midst of a grand

* *Mémoires de Madame Ducrest.*

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dinner, which the Mayor of Evreux was giving to the members of the empress' household and to her principal guests, an employé from the townhall entered the banqueting hall, bearing an official letter to the host. The man's face was radiant, writes Mme. Ducrest, and he shouted from the threshold of the door, "The King of Rome is born!" 'I am unable to describe the effect produced by these words,' she adds. 'All the guests, rising abruptly from their seats, approached the bearer of this great news, all of them asking questions at once as to the occurrence and the effect it had produced in Paris.'

We shall continue to borrow some other original details from Mme. Ducrest's work, because these particulars throw a vivid light on the Empress Josephine's true character. As soon as they had heard the important news of the birth of the young prince, the guests of the Mayor had hurried back to Navarre.

'Hardly had we entered the drawing-room,' says Mme. Ducrest, 'when Her Majesty asked us if there were any details known: "I am sorry to be so far from Paris," she repeatedly exclaimed, "at Malmaison I would get all news so promptly! I am very satisfied to see that the sacrifice I have made for France has been of use and that the country's future is assured. How happy the emperor must be! Only one thing saddens me, that I have not heard of his happiness from himself. But he has so many orders to give, and so many congratulations to receive! . . ."'

Prince Eugène arrived the following day at Navarre and related to his mother's guests the incidents, now

so well known, to which the birth of the King of Rome gave rise. 'Assuredly,' adds Mme. Ducrest, 'Prince Eugène would not have given an account proving so decidedly Napoleon's love for Marie-Louise, in the presence of Josephine, if he had not known that she had of her own free will sacrificed her whole life to the needs of the State, and that she too desired to see an heir to that throne, which she had abdicated with a sore heart indeed, seeing that she was separating herself from the man she loved, but without regrets of an ambitious nature. This is what several writers seem to have doubted, and it is important that the point should be rightly understood, for it gives a new justification to Her Majesty for her feelings of regret. Those who have written that she regretted the emperor more than the husband could not have known all that goes on in a woman's heart; they had never found out the depths of the heart they judged so wrongly. We must therefore forgive them their error, which, however, it is some satisfaction to be able to point out.'*

As soon as Prince Eugène arrived in Josephine's presence, he communicated to her the message with which he had been charged by the emperor when he said good-bye to him.

"You are going to see your mother, Eugène; tell her I am sure she will rejoice, more than anyone else, at my happiness. I would have written to her, if I had not been absorbed in the pleasure of contemplating my son. I only tear myself away from

* Madame Ducrest. *Mémoires sur l'Impératrice Joséphine.*

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him for the performance of indispensable duties. This evening I shall discharge the pleasantest duty of all, I shall write to Josephine."

Indeed, at eleven o'clock, just as the empress and her guests were about to take tea, a great commotion took place in the ante-chambers; the doors of the room were noisily thrown open and the folding doors of the gallery where Her Majesty was seated were quickly pushed aside by the usher, who cried: "A message from the emperor!" The empress and the viceroy went at once to meet a young page, of pleasing appearance, who seemed extremely fatigued. It was, says Mme. Ducrest, M. de Saint-Hilaire, whom Josephine recognized, although she had not seen him for two years. To give him some time to compose himself, she addressed him several questions in that gracious manner with which she did everything. The emperor's page was the bearer of a letter, dated 22nd March, in which Napoleon, after announcing to his first wife the birth of his son, wrote as follows: 'My son is a big healthy boy. He has my chest, my mouth and my eyes. I hope he will fulfil his destiny. Eugène continues to give me great satisfaction; he has never done anything to displease me.' Thus, writes M. Aubenas, did the emperor, with a touching delicacy of feeling, seize the moment when he was communicating to Josephine an event, which must arouse her old regrets, to give her son Eugène one of those certificates which serve as the testimonial of a noble life.*

* Aubenas, vol. ii, pp. 524-525.

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The empress, who had left the drawing-room with her son to study the contents of the emperor's letter, re-entered it half-an-hour later. Her eyes were very red and the viceroy seemed much moved. When M. de Saint-Hilaire came, on his departure, to ask for Her Majesty's orders, she exclaimed, handing him her reply and a small case of red morocco containing a diamond pin worth 5000 francs, "There is something for the emperor and something for yourself." Josephine had had it made for the announcement of the birth of a girl, and intended to present one worth 12,000 francs in case the birth of a boy were announced. But the viceroy pointed out to her that this present was too costly; that it would be thought she wanted people to speak of her munificence, and that it would therefore be better to restrain her generosity, and only to do just what was necessary.*

* *Mémoires de Madame Ducrest* (Barba edition).

CHAPTER XIX

AFTER continuing her stay at the Chateau of Navarre for a few months longer, Josephine resolved to betake herself to Malmaison. She had always shown a very marked preference for this residence. The empress was there closer to Paris, less isolated, nearer in fact, to the Tuileries, news from which, as one can understand, always remained of great interest to her. The pleasantest reminiscences of her life were there, and it was to a great extent on these recollections of a past happier than the present that she lived. Josephine found herself more within reach of the visits of her former acquaintances, and it gave her pleasure to see more frequently a certain number of her intimate friends, whose conversation was agreeable to her.

‘The empress,’ says Mme. Ducrest, ‘still felt an attachment for the emperor, which bordered on worship, and had not permitted a single chair in the apartment occupied by him to be moved; instead of living in it herself she had preferred very inferior accommodation on the first floor. Everything had remained in exactly the same condition as when the

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emperor had left his study : an historical work lay on his desk, with a marker at the place where he had stopped reading, the pen which he was using still retained the ink which a moment later might have dictated laws to Europe, while a map of the world, on which he used to shew the confidants of his schemes the countries he wished to conquer, still bore the marks of some impatient movements, occasioned perhaps by some slight contradiction. Josephine had taken upon herself alone the task of removing the dust which soiled what she called his *relics*, and she rarely allowed anyone to enter this sanctuary.

‘Napoleon’s Roman bed was without curtains, some arms were hung on the walls, and some articles of male attire were scattered about the room. It seemed as if he were just about to enter this room from which he had banished himself for ever.

‘The ground floor was magnificently furnished, containing a number of tables of Florentine mosaics, clocks of lapis-lazuli and agate, bronzes of exquisite workmanship and Sèvres porcelain given by the emperor. The furniture of the drawing-room was upholstered in tapestry, the empress’ own work, the ground of white silk and the double J interlaced with Burgundy roses ; when there were few visitors covers of grey program silk were used. Josephine’s apartment was of extreme simplicity, draped with white muslin. Indeed the gold toilet-table presented by the City was characteristic of the person who occupied the room ; nothing could have been found worthy of rivaling the richness of this piece of furniture, and

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it stood quite alone. Several times Her Majesty had wished to send it to the Vice-Queen ; Prince Eugène, however, opposed the idea in my presence. It was a personal gift she had received at the coronation. At the time of the divorce Napoleon sent it her, together with the gold breakfast service, and many other articles of great value which she had omitted to take with her.*

Amongst the principal State celebrities who were frequent visitors in Josephine's *salon*, the one first deserving of mention is the High Chancellor Cambacérès, whose convictions had always made him a strong opponent of the divorce ; then comes Marshal Masséna. The Prince of Essling had even bought and put in repair the still existing wing of the ancient castle of Richelieu at Rueil, which, as the reader knows, was in the neighbourhood of Malmaison. Queen Hortense often came from Paris to stay with her mother, and brought with her, for whole weeks at a time, her two young children, of whom their grandmother was very fond.† And last, but not the least, Napoleon's pretty frequent visits applied a healing balm to Josephine's loving but ever inconsolable heart.

Mme. Ducrest has preserved for us in her writings an account of one of these visits, always so longed for and so impatiently awaited by the empress. One day the emperor arrived unexpectedly at Malmaison ; the whole chateau was at once in com-

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires*.

† The younger one became Napoleon III.

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motion, while the empress was in raptures : ‘ With a delicacy worthy of herself she received His Majesty in the garden. They sat down on a circular seat, surrounding a beautiful tulip tree in front of the drawing-room windows, but placed at such a distance as to render it impossible for a word of the doubtless highly interesting conversation to be overheard. All the ladies of the household, hidden behind the window curtains, tried to guess from Josephine’s expressive physiognomy and Napoleon’s gestures what they were conversing about. Two hours passed in this manner ; at last the emperor took the empress’ hand, kissed it, and walked to his barouche, which was waiting at the gates of the park. Josephine accompanied him, and from the happy expression on her face during the remainder of the day, it was easy to infer that she had been satisfied with everything which had been said. She repeated several times that she had never found the emperor more agreeable, and that she deeply regretted her inability to do anything for this *favourite of fortune.*’ Some months later this epithet was no longer suitable to Napoleon ! . . . Fortune had betrayed him, only his glory remained ! . . . ’*

At Malmaison etiquette was as rigorously observed as at Navarre. At nine o’clock in the morning everyone had to assemble suitably dressed in the drawing-room, where senators, councillors of state and other members of the emperor’s and Empress Marie-Louise’s households, or other princes and princesses of the Imperial family, eagerly presented

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires.*

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themselves to pay their court to Josephine. All the men were in uniform, in the garb appropriate to their office. The Empress Josephine's chamberlains and equerries were of course bound to follow this example. Mme. Ducrest adds to the above some further details: 'Lunch,' she says, 'was served in the same way as at Navarre. There were generally ten or twelve guests invited beforehand, or asked to stay after their visit, which they paid on purpose early in the day. On rising from table the company returned to the drawing-room; the empress chatted for about an hour, walking up and down the gallery.'

M. de Bausset, who came to pay his respects to the empress at Malmaison, was received by Josephine, according to Mme. Ducrest, with some coldness. She doubtless found this visit somewhat late in the day, as she had been for more than three weeks at her country seat. M. de Bausset committed the blunder of saying that the emperor had asked him whether he had paid a visit to Malmaison. "It is probably to this question," observed the empress with a serious air, "that I owe the honour of your visit." Josephine in consequence did not invite him either to lunch or dinner for one of the following days, as she was generally accustomed to do.

The Empress Josephine had asked as a favour that the emperor should allow the King of Rome to be brought to see her. Napoleon promised, but was somewhat afraid of the emotion to which the sight of the child might give rise. He gave way

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however before her entreaties and Madame de Montesquiou conducted the young prince to Bagatelle, a small pleasure resort in the Bois de Boulogne. This took place without the knowledge of the Empress Marie-Louise, who was jealous of the ascendancy that a woman of whom Napoleon had been so enamoured might still exercise over him. Poor Josephine could not restrain her tears at the sight of a child which recalled her past sorrows and the loss of a happiness which Heaven had denied her. She embraced him passionately ; and seemed pleased to cherish the illusion that she was lavishing her caresses on her own child. She was in ecstasy over his strength and grace and was unable to tear herself away from him ; the moments indeed during which she held him in her arms seemed very short to her.* This interview took place, it is believed, in 1812, shortly before the emperor's departure for the Russian campaign.

War between France and Russia having become imminent, the emperor, accompanied by the Empress Marie-Louise, started for Dresden on the 9th of May 1812. There Napoleon held a brilliant court before commencing hostilities against the Emperor Alexander, a step he had only taken reluctantly and after much hesitation. This period of the Emperor Napoleon's stay at Dresden marks the culminating point of his power. He appeared there, beside Austrian monarchs, the King of Prussia and the various princes of the Rhenish Confederation,

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. ii, pp. 465-466. (Dentu, publisher, 1894.)

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like Agamemnon among the kings. Marie-Louise also, happy at finding herself again in the midst of her family, was welcomed with the greatest marks of affection and even of deference. After Napoleon's departure to take command of the Grande Armée, Marie-Louise made a triumphal journey in the month of June to Prague, with her father and step-mother, the Emperor and Empress of Austria, in the course of which she was the recipient of all sorts of honours and attentions. Napoleon's star still shone with its full lustre and all the sovereigns of central Europe bowed before it. Marie-Louise finally left Prague on the 1st of July; her father, the emperor, escorted her as far as Carlsbad, and on the 18th she reached Saint-Cloud. Almost simultaneously the Empress Josephine left Malmaison for Milan, where she went to console her daughter-in-law for the absence of Prince Eugène, who had left to rejoin the emperor and his army. She intended to assist at her daughter's confinement and to keep her company for some time. One would have thought that Napoleon's two consorts had come to an understanding not to remain in each other's neighbourhood.

There are unfortunately very few dates bearing on the Empress Josephine's occupations in the years 1812 and 1813, and her mode of life during this troubled period of Napoleon's career does not present any striking incidents. The first disasters experienced by the French armies in the fatal Russian campaign were the cause of the bitterest distress of mind to her, both as Prince Eugène's mother and as Napoleon's

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former consort. At the close of this sad year 1812, Josephine grieved at the same time over the country's disasters, the emperor's misfortunes, and the dangers to which her son was exposed ; she was often without any news from the latter, involved as he was in the intricate meshes of that struggle which extended even to the confines of Europe. Josephine's son displayed a heroic determination throughout. He remained the most loyal and the most devoted of the emperor's lieutenants. In vain did the enemies of France approach him with offers to recognise him as King of Italy, if he would consent to abandon Napoleon's cause ; Prince Eugène spurned overtures which he rightly considered dishonourable. In a letter to his wife, the daughter, as will be remembered, of the King of Bavaria, he exclaimed indignantly : 'What times we are living in' (alluding to the overtures above referred to), 'and how the glory of a throne is degraded by those who demand baseness, ingratitude and treason from the aspirant to kingship. No, I shall never be a king !'

The publication of the 29th bulletin, in which Napoleon did not attempt to disguise his disasters in the fatal Russian campaign, added to Josephine's alarm and grief. It was already the 18th of December when Napoleon, conquered by the elements, re-entered the Tuileries at a very late hour after having traversed the whole of central Europe with great rapidity. In the meantime Murat on his side had abandoned the command of the remains of the Grande Armée, which the emperor had confided

to his charge. The latter, informed of the departure of his brother-in-law, who was on his way back to his kingdom of Naples, appointed Prince Eugène to replace him at the head of the glorious remains of this brave but unfortunate army. The *Moniteur* of 27th January 1813 reported the news of the King of Naples' departure for his dominions in the following terms: 'The King of Naples, being indisposed, has given up the command of the army, which he has confided to the Viceroy. The latter is more accustomed to high commands; he has the confidence of the emperor.' It was always the difficult missions, requiring zeal and devotion in a superlative degree, which were entrusted by the emperor to Josephine's son. His first wife and her children remained to the very end, in the days of misfortune, Napoleon's staunchest, most faithful and most devoted friends. This will constitute their claim to the undying regard of posterity, for they never permitted their personal interests to silence the stern and imperious voice of duty.

Napoleon spent the first three months of the year 1813 in reorganising a formidable army in Paris to cope with the forces of the coalition, which had been emboldened by the reverses of 1812. We do not know whether he saw Josephine frequently during this busy and anxious period of his life. In any case Josephine, who had returned to Malmaison, watched the preparations for this unequal and merciless struggle with an anxiety which can be readily understood. In the month of April Napoleon, after conferring the Regency

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on Marie-Louise, had left Paris again to put himself at the head of his new army, which he had, so to speak, called up as by magic out of the ground.

Amid all the duties of his camp life, the emperor's constant solicitude never lost sight of Josephine's interests. Having heard that she had not altered her extravagant habits and her fondness for spending money, he addressed to his first wife the two following letters, which have been published in the Didot collection.

On the 25th of August 1813 Napoleon wrote Josephine :

‘Put your affairs into some sort of order ; do not spend more than 1,500,000 francs, and lay aside every year a similar sum ; this will give you a reserve of 15,000,000 francs in ten years for your grandchildren ; it will be pleasant to be able to give them something and to be of use to them. Instead of doing this, I am told you have debts ; if true this is very wrong of you. Look after your own affairs and do not give away everything to anyone who asks. If you want to please me, let me see that you have saved a large sum. Just think what a bad opinion I should form of you, if I knew you were in debt in spite of a revenue of 3,000,000 francs.’*

This letter, the emperor's only expression of dissatisfaction since the divorce, produced on Josephine,

* Napoleon always ended by paying Josephine's debts : ‘She must not count on me any more,’ was all he said. ‘I am mortal, and my life is more precarious than that of others !’ And yet Josephine dreamed of building a real chateau at Malmaison. (*Savine.*)

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M. Aubenas says, a much greater effect than the scoldings she received in former days. She was so vexed that she became ill. The following day Napoleon hastened to apply balm to the wound, and sent her the following letter by a page :

‘Friday morning, 1813.

‘I am sending to enquire after your health, because Hortense told me you were in bed yesterday. I was angry with you about your debts ; I do not want you to have any ; on the contrary I hope you will put aside a million francs every year, to give your grand-daughters when they marry.

‘Still never doubt my friendship for you, and do not let this matter vex you.

‘Good-bye, my dear Josephine, let me know that you are better. They tell me that you are getting as stout as a good farmer’s wife from Normandy.

‘NAPOLÉON.’

Vain counsels ; Josephine never mended her ways, and her inheritance was far from consisting of the millions with which Doctor O’Meara so generously credits it. *

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l’impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii.

CHAPTER XX

THE events which occurred in the course of the year 1813 marked and accentuated the decline of Napoleon's fortunes. After the brilliant successes of Lutzen and Bautzen, followed by the important victory of Dresden, the Empire's calamities commenced. The Leipzig disaster, by precipitating the retreat of the French army, soon led to the successive defection of Bavaria, Würtemberg and the Rhenish Confederacy. In spite of the barren victory of Hanau, the armies of the Coalition soon penetrated into France. It was now that Napoleon again displayed in this time of adversity all the military talent of the days of General Bonaparte, and held in check during three months with the remains of the Grande Armée the combined forces of the whole of Europe. The immortal campaign of 1814 was soon to give the finishing touch to the glory of the great captain, without, however, succeeding in averting his downfall.

Meantime Josephine had remained for several days without news of the emperor, and became a prey to the gravest apprehensions. Seeing the serious progress

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that the allies were making in their march on Paris, Napoleon's first wife feared the worst. She interrogated with ever increasing anxiety the few visitors who arrived at Malmaison from Paris. She was so distracted with grief that tears stood in her eyes, and she put them all sorts of irrelevant questions.

Prince Eugène had remained in Italy, where he was engaged in stubbornly defending the kingdom of which he was viceroy against the Austrian armies. After the loss of the battle of la Rothière, Napoleon, fearing to witness the enemy's arrival before the walls of Paris, had written the following letter from Nogent to King Joseph on the 18th of February :

‘My brother, let this letter be delivered into the Empress Josephine's own hands. I am writing to her so that she may write to Eugène. Please tell her to send you her letter, which you can despatch by express messenger.

‘Your affectionate brother

‘NAPOLEON.’

Without losing a moment the Empress Josephine, inspired by the wishes and exhortations of the man who for so long had been her husband, hastened to send word to her son, the Viceroy :

‘Malmaison, 9th February.

‘Do not lose an instant, my dear Eugène : whatever obstacles you encounter, redouble your efforts to carry out the order the emperor has given you. He has just written me on the subject. His intention is that you should march on the Alps, leaving only the

Italian troops in Mantua and the other Italian towns. His letter ends with the words ; “ France before everything, France needs all her children ! ”

‘ Come then, my dear son, hasten to us ; never will your zeal have done the emperor a greater service. I can assure you that every moment is precious.

‘ I know that your wife was preparing to leave Milan ; tell me if I can be of any use to her ? Good-bye, my dear Eugène, I have only time to send you my love and to repeat that you must hasten here as quickly as possible.

‘ JOSEPHINE.’

These letters were in connection with the order given to Prince Eugène to march with his army on Geneva, and join forces with Marshal Augereau. If subsequent events, especially what was taking place at Naples, had not induced the emperor to abandon this move, its consequences might have been of the greatest importance.*

When Josephine heard a little later on, says Mme. Ducrest, of the preparations her brother-in-law and the Empress Marie-Louise were making for their departure to Blois, where it had been decided in the last council that the Regency must be established, she had not the slightest doubt that fresh calamities were threatening Paris. She resolved to fly as soon as possible : but in terror lest she should fall into the hands of Napoleon’s enemies, she hesitated as to

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. iii, p. 191.

which line of retreat she should choose. Finally she decided to proceed to Navarre.

On the 29th March, after giving orders to her household to prepare everything for going to this chateau, she started in great haste at eight o'clock in the morning in cold and rainy weather.

Josephine left her beloved residence of Malmaison in such a state of despair that all those around her had the utmost difficulty in allaying her fears; she had already heard terrified shouts of: "Here are the Cossacks!" Their arrival in a village was indeed always followed by its ruin and the plunder of its wretched inhabitants.

At a distance of ten leagues from Malmaison the axle of Her Majesty's carriage broke on the high road; there was nothing for it but to stop. While her coach was being repaired, Josephine saw at a distance a detachment of hussars, whom she took for a Prussian column. Imagining that these soldiers had been sent to follow her, she was so frightened that she began running away across the fields, thinking they intended to carry her off by force; but one of her footmen, l'Esperance, who had recognised in this small body of horse the uniform of the third regiment of hussars, ran after her and caught her up about 300 yards away, quite beside herself with despair. The journey was continued however without any untoward occurrences.

What melancholy and painful reflections must have assailed her on crossing the threshold of a chateau, where she thought she had to fear the worst. "Alas,"

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she said to Mme. de Rémusat, who was sitting beside her, "Bonaparte must certainly be ignorant of what is going on at the gates of Paris ; and if he does know, how bitter his thoughts must be."

Her ladies-in-waiting noticed that, once she had reached Navarre, she sought for solitude and often shut herself up alone to read over letters, which were carefully put away in her large travelling dressing-case. One of these letters she always kept by her, and when she had finished reading it and gazing at it, she hid it in her bosom.*

It was the last note the emperor had written her from Brienne, in which he said :

‘ . . . On again seeing these places where I spent my early childhood and comparing the peaceful state I was in then with the turmoil and anxieties which are my lot to-day, I have often said to myself : I have sought death on many a battlefield ; it has no longer any terrors for me ; to-day it would be a blessing to me . . . but I would fain see Josephine once more ! ’
Napoleon was however never to see her again !

We may continue to borrow from Mme. Ducrest’s *Mémoires* some details regarding the Empress Josephine’s situation at this period, which cannot fail to interest the reader :

‘ If the rumour of the approach of the allied troops had penetrated to Malmaison, it was heard no less distinctly in the precincts of the chateau of Navarre, where everyone was lamenting the disasters which had befallen Napoleon. Still Josephine had not abandoned

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires*.



HORTENSE DE BEAUHARNAIS.

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all hope ; she relied on the bravery and ability of the Duke of Ragusa, to whom the defence of Paris had been entrusted. Her Majesty's situation was hourly becoming more and more trying : she did not know what to hope or what to fear. Her suite were at last unable to hide from her any longer the fact that the capital had surrendered, that the three foreign monarchs had made their entry into the city, and that Napoleon had retired to Fontainebleau.

'On learning the terrible catastrophe which had just decided the emperor's fate, Josephine fainted away, a gloomy silence reigning around her ; all her ladies-in-waiting, pale and in consternation, seemed to succumb to despondency and grief. Josephine gradually came to herself and exclaimed : " I must not stay here any longer, my presence is required near the emperor, I must accomplish what was the duty of Marie-Louise rather than mine ; the emperor is alone, abandoned. . . . Well, I at least will not fail him ; I could only bear being separated from him in his good fortune. Now I am sure he is expecting me." And then the tears coursed down her cheeks and brought relief to her feelings, overwhelmed as she was by such bitter disappointments and recollections. '*

One cannot avoid comparing Josephine's attitude in Napoleon's hours of adversity, and that of the Empress Marie-Louise in the same circumstances. The characters of the two women were as wide apart as the poles, and it has been justly remarked that Marie-Louise was Josephine's avenger !

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires*.

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‘During her brief residence at Navarre,’ writes Mme. Ducrest, ‘Josephine wrote a great deal without enjoying any kind of relaxation ; she generally took walks twice a day in the park ; in the mornings she was always alone, and in the afternoons was accompanied by one of her ladies-in-waiting.

‘The conversation generally turned on the political situation of France, and on Napoleon, about whom she liked to tell anecdotes which were known to herself alone ; but at the end of her walk she appeared overwhelmed with the burden of an all-absorbing sorrow, and always ended with the words, uttered with a sigh : “ Oh ! if he had only listened to me.”

‘Some days after her arrival at Navarre, she was urged to accede to the wishes expressed by the allied sovereigns to see her at Malmaison. These marks of a consideration which she so fully deserved moved her to tears : yet she hesitated to proceed there, feeling as if it were her duty to remain henceforth in obscurity. It was only considerations of an important nature, relating to the interests and the protection of her family, that induced her to abandon her retreat in order to do the honours at Malmaison.’* She hoped perhaps to be able also to serve other interests, which were equally dear to her, namely those of the Emperor Napoleon.

On the 2nd of April Queen Hortense, who had been coldly received by the Empress Marie-Louise at Blois, had returned to stay with her mother, whom she was destined never to leave again as long as Josephine

* Aubenas, vol. ii, p. 547.

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lived. For a moment Hortense had harboured the idea of going to settle in Martinique, but the Empress Josephine, hearing of her intention, exacted from her daughter a formal promise that she would not leave her, under the threat of putting an end to her life.*

It was during these few sorrowful days spent at Navarre, before her return to Malmaison, that the Empress Josephine heard of the occurrences at Fontainebleau and the definite abdication of the emperor. For some days communications had been interrupted, and neither Josephine nor Hortense had received any direct news from Paris, Fontainebleau or Blois. All sorts of contradictory reports were circulated at Navarre, and it was impossible for the two ladies to verify their authenticity. Josephine remained thus a prey to all the tortures of uncertainty, until one night an auditor of the Privy Council, M. de Maussion, reached the empress bearing an important message. It was the Duke of Bassano who despatched this emissary to Josephine to acquaint her with the details which she was awaiting with such feverish impatience. Doubtless a rumour of the attempt to poison the emperor at Fontainebleau had penetrated to Navarre, for the empress' first words to the bearer of the message were: "Tell me that the emperor is alive . . . tell it me again!" Never since her divorce had the unfortunate lady suffered so much as she did on learning this succession of disasters.

* Aubenas, vol. ii, p. 547.

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‘She (Josephine) threw a cloak over her shoulders, and dragging M. de Maussion along with her, while he was still engaged in describing briefly to her the plan for the emperor’s abdication and the intention of sending him to Elba, she ran to awaken the queen, and throwing herself on her bed, exclaimed with tears in her eyes: “Oh! Hortense, they are sending poor Napoleon to the island of Elba! Misfortune has overtaken him at last! . . . But for his wife I would go and share his imprisonment!” Her spirit revolted at the sight of the downfall of the man who, in his misfortune, became again her husband.

‘M. de Maussion then gave the empress and her daughter details about everything which interested them: Napoleon’s attempts to retake Paris, and the Duke of Ragusa’s defection; his abandonment by most of his servants and the honourable fidelity of a few; the return of the Bourbons, and Napoleon’s enforced abdication, together with the Coalition’s intentions regarding him. Josephine’s thoughts were confined to the emperor’s misfortunes. Knowing his character and what he must be suffering, she was distressed at the thought of the fall in store for him, and envied Marie-Louise her right of going with him into exile.’*

It is now well known to everyone that the forgetful Marie-Louise never claimed this right! She supposed the Emperor Napoleon to be as resigned and satisfied with his fate on the island of Elba, as she herself was at Vienna. . . . There was no room in Josephine’s

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii, pp. 541-542.

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devoted heart for the indifferent egotism of which Napoleon's second wife has given so many proofs, and the profound attachment which his first wife retained for him has never been sufficiently appreciated. 'This attachment has been persistently denied,' Mme. Ducrest writes, 'and the statement has been repeated that she only loved the sovereign power to which he had raised her. Those who argue in this fashion have probably never known Her Majesty intimately. I always found her full of gratitude to Napoleon, and ready to prove the tenderness of her attachment to him by making all the sacrifices she could on his behalf. I have the profound conviction that, if she had lived, nothing would have persuaded her to remain in France when she knew that Napoleon was unhappy. She only consoled herself for not seeing him when she knew that he was carrying all before him. Josephine, admired and esteemed as she was by the allied sovereigns, would have obtained a permission that another could not have asked. The noble qualities of Napoleon's first consort would have lent beauty to the barren rock of his exile, and the hero's proud spirit would have chafed less under her sweet influence.'*

While the emperor was making his way to the place of his exile, the Empress Josephine, yielding to the wishes of all her friends, had returned to Malmaison. She was rather revolted than distressed at the innumerable insults of which Napoleon had been the object, since his defeat and proscription. Josephine

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires sur Joséphine*.

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was indignant at all the base accusations and miserable calumnies which were directed against the now captive lion, not only by his adversaries, but even by those who, in the days of his greatness, had sounded his praises most loudly. Mlle. Avrillon, her reader, has described her moral sufferings in the following terms :

‘I was myself a witness of the Empress Josephine’s fits of insomnia and of her terrible dreams. I have seen her pass whole days in gloomy meditation. I know all I have witnessed, and, in my opinion, it was grief that killed her.’ For our part, we are inclined to believe in the correctness of such an impression produced on a person so intimately conversant with the fallen sovereign. One can therefore easily understand the weariness of life which the Empress Josephine displayed on several occasions, if one considers the feelings of despair caused to her exquisitely sensitive nature by the accumulation of so many moral tortures !

Prince Eugène’s arrival at Malmaison, in the month of April, created a happy diversion for Josephine from the poignant griefs which assailed her. She had always been justifiably proud of this son, who was a model of devotion and chivalrous loyalty. Up to the last moment he had stubbornly opposed the Austrians in Italy, and had done his duty bravely and completely. The emperor’s abdication had found him still in arms, and it was only after he had obtained confirmation of the news, that he had decided to come and rejoin his mother. Eugène had at once resigned his powers as

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viceroi of Italy, after safeguarding by an agreement the interests of the French army, which he had commanded so long and so gloriously. Posterity may well recognise in Prince Eugène a worthy rival of Bayard, the chevalier without fear and without reproach. History too, we doubt not, will appreciate as it deserves the noble conduct of Josephine's son during the course of his too short career.

CHAPTER XXI

THE Emperor of Russia, who had entered Paris on the 31st of March at the head of the allied armies, had taken up his quarters at Talleyrand's house in the Rue Saint-Florentin, with his minister Nesselrode, who had preceded him there. As soon as the monarch had got through all the business resulting from the intrigues of every sort with which he was surrounded, he sent a message to the Empress Josephine, asking her to grant him an interview. Alexander was anxious personally to assure Napoleon's first wife of his respect and of the protecting care he was desirous of exercising towards herself as well as her children. The Emperor of Russia, since his arrival in Paris, had on several occasions conversed with the friends of Josephine and Queen Hortense, amongst others with the Duke of Vicenza, on the subject of his fixed intention to make himself useful to the members of the Beauharnais family.*

* As far as the Emperor of Austria is concerned, the Prince of Coburg remarked to Josephine, according to Mme. de Souza's story, that Francis II would have come to see her, had he not feared that his visit might not be acceptable to her. "Why," replied Josephine, "it is not me he has dethroned, but his own daughter!"

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The situation of Josephine and of her children with reference to the man whom circumstances had lately made Napoleon's most irreconcilable enemy was a peculiarly delicate one. Alexander had, nevertheless, not always been the emperor's declared enemy, and had even manifested towards him a disposition of an apparently quite opposite kind before the Russian expedition. Hortense, inspired by a feeling of just pride, had been at first unwilling to be beholden in any way to this sovereign's solicitude. Josephine on the contrary, with whom her children's interests had now become the principal consideration, felt her prejudices against the powerful Russian autocrat gradually diminishing. The latter indeed had ended by telling the empress that, with or without her approval, he was determined to interest himself in her children's fortunes, and Josephine, touched by his fair promises shewed herself grateful, as far as she was concerned, for his kindness.

As soon as he heard that Prince Eugène had returned to France, the Emperor Alexander came to see him at Malmaison, and renewed his offers of service. His object was to obtain the royal establishment on behalf of the ex-Viceroy of Italy, as to which Napoleon had made a stipulation in his favour by a special article, inserted in the treaty of 11th April 1814, and signed by all the sovereigns of Europe. Alexander's kind intentions, unfortunately for Prince Eugène, were not successful in triumphing over the inertia and opposition which the carrying out of the clauses of this treaty encountered from the principal continental powers.

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Terrified at the idea that Louis XVIII's government might oblige her to leave France, Josephine had thought of addressing herself directly to the King and asking his protection. At the close of a dinner-party at Malmaison, to which the Emperor of Russia had been invited, this monarch, who was aware of Josephine's anxieties on this subject, is reported to have said to the empress: "Look upon me, Madame, for yourself as well as for your children, as a second Alexander protecting the family of Darius." Alexander is also said to have shewn himself very opposed to the plan Josephine had for a moment entertained of writing to King Louis XVIII to put herself under his protection. "Such a letter, would, believe me, be taken amiss, and would lead you into disgrace," he said. "The Czar of Russia will be able to protect you and yours." *

On the 15th May, according to M. Aubenas, the empress went to stay for two days at the château of Saint-Leu with Queen Hortense. The Emperor of Russia also paid a visit there, and accompanied the two princesses for a walk in the woods of Montmorency. On her return Josephine felt unwell and fatigued. She retired to her apartments, while her daughter walked with her guests in the gardens. Mlle. Cochelet, Queen Hortense's reader, had followed her. On entering her room the empress, it appears, sank down into a long chair, shewing all the signs of gloomy dejection.

"Mademoiselle Cochelet," said the empress after an interval, "I cannot overcome the terrible sadness that

* Michaud's *Biographie*.

takes possession of me ; I make every effort to hide it from my children, but I suffer the more in doing so. I am beginning to lose courage. The Emperor of Russia is certainly full of attentions and affection for us, but his kindness has so far been confined to words. What is he going to do for my son, my daughter, and her children? Is he not in a position to insist on something being done for them? Do you know what will happen when he is gone? They will not perform any of the promises they have made him ; I shall see my children ruined, and I cannot bear this idea ; it makes me desperate. My sufferings are severe enough on account of the Emperor's fate, fallen as he is from such a pinnacle of greatness, and banished to an island far away from France his country, which has abandoned him ; must I still see my children wanderers and in poverty ! I feel that this thought is killing me."

Queen Hortense's reader endeavoured to calm and reassure the empress, and spoke to her of the real interest the Russian monarch felt in Prince Eugène and his sister, in spite of the queen's reluctance to accept favours from him : "Yes," replied Josephine, "there is no denying that he is shewing a consideration for us that one would never have expected, but in spite of all these demonstrations of kindly feeling I see nothing positive. You are on good terms with M. de Nesselrode ; find out from him whether we have any grounds for hope. Is it Austria that is hostile to my son? That can hardly be. Is it the Bourbons? They are in any case under such obliga-

tions to me that they might repay them to my children. Have I not been kind enough to all the unfortunate members of their party? Truly I never imagined that they would return to France, but it gave me pleasure to be of use to their friends: they were Frenchmen who had suffered adversity—they were my former acquaintances, and I felt compassion for the hard fate of these princes, whom I had seen in their younger and happier days. Besides, have I not asked Bonaparte twenty times to allow the Duchess of Orleans and the Duchess of Bourbon to return? It was through me that he relieved their wants and granted them a pension which they received in foreign countries. I am sure they at any rate will come and see me, and I am surprised that no one but M. de Rivière has so far paid me a visit, for M. de Polignac owes me his life, and he has not put in an appearance at Malmaison.”*

At other times, when certain speeches or more favourable indications had increased her hopes of seeing Eugène and Queen Hortense provided for in conformity with her desires, Josephine transferred all her anxious solicitude to Napoleon and declared, “Although I am no longer his wife, I would start tomorrow and rejoin him, if I did not fear to cause unpleasantness between him and the consort he has preferred to me. It is now especially, when he is abandoned by nearly every one, that it would be a satisfaction to me to be near him, to help him to bear the tediousness of his life on the island of Elba,

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii, pp. 551-552.

and to share his sorrows. Never before have I grieved so much over this divorce, though it was always painful to me."*

In spite of the efforts of the empress' physicians her health failed to improve; she was affected with general weakness and was evidently suffering from severe prostration.

Prince Eugène and Queen Hortense made themselves justly anxious about their mother's morbid condition, which she tried to hide so as not to distress them.

'On Monday, 23rd May,' writes M. Aubenas, 'The King of Prussia came with his two young sons to pay a visit at Malmaison and remained to dinner. The Empress Josephine, who for some days past had been in evident pain, managed to control her feelings so successfully, while doing the honours of her home, that she was thought to be entirely cured. On the following day she was further obliged to receive the two Russian Grand-Dukes Nicolas and Michael, so anxious were all these royalties to vie with each other in paying her homage. During the day they went to see the neighbourhood with Prince Eugène.' † Meantime Josephine had retired to her room, exhausted by the effort she had made, and did not re-appear at dinner, but asked her daughter to take her place and entertain her princely guests.‡

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires*. † Aubenas, vol. ii, p. 553.

‡ It is remarkable that in 1814, during the two last months of her life, three young men all destined to be emperors, often found themselves together in Josephine's company at Malmaison. Taking them in the order of their ages these were: the grand-duke Nicholas,

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‘On the 24th,’ continues M. Aubenas, ‘Mlle. Cochelet paid a visit to the empress, anxious to hear news of her health. She found her in tears and with a newspaper in her hands, which she handed her visitor. “Does my daughter read this paper?” she asked her; “try and prevent her from seeing it. Read the article it contains about the tomb of her poor child.* How is it possible they can write such things? Just see in what contemptuous terms they speak of him, saying his remains should be removed from the church of Notre-Dame and be buried in an ordinary cemetery. They actually dare to meddle with graves! It is just like the times of the Revolution. Oh! who could have imagined I should have to bear this from people to whom I have done so many services!”’ ‘This emotion,’ adds M. Aubenas, ‘was not calculated to diminish the melancholy which was daily undermining her constitution. She also expatiated upon her grief at not seeing her children’s position duly established, and on her fears with regard to this matter.’ †

On the following day, the 25th May, the Emperor

who was one day to wear the Imperial diadem, and against whom France and England undertook the Crimean War; then Prince William, one of the sons of the King of Prussia, who became emperor after the disasters of 1870; and lastly Josephine’s own grandson, the future Napoleon III, who at first waged a successful war against Russia, but afterwards met with ill-fortune and was dethroned on 4th September 1870, as a consequence of the disastrous struggle with Germany.

* The Prince Royal of Holland, Queen Hortense’s eldest son, who died of croup in 1807.

† Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii, p. 554.

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Alexander came to visit Josephine, and finding her much changed, proposed to send her his own doctor. This physician was questioned by Queen Hortense, after he had examined the patient, and did not conceal from her that he found the empress seriously ill and recommended that she should be treated with blisters. Prince Eugène and Queen Hortense, who adored their mother, and had not thought her condition so grave, were much alarmed at the Russian doctor's diagnosis. The best doctors in Paris were at once summoned to attend the empress, and after a consultation with Dr. Horeau, her ordinary physician, they pronounced her to be suffering from a very pernicious form of *angina pectoris*. The empress had complained a few days before of pains in the throat, but her friends as well as she herself had put it down to a cold, which she had neglected. Later on absurd reports were spread that she had been poisoned! Who, however, could have wanted to take the life of the good empress, and who could have had anything to gain by her disappearance? To put the question is, in our opinion, to answer it.

On the 28th May, there was a slight and deceptive improvement in the condition of the august patient, but this passing improvement did not last long. 'This angelic woman,' writes Mme. Ducrest, 'always afraid of distressing those she loved, did not complain, but took all the remedies ordered, and sought to reassure all those round her bedside by her sweet and cheerful demeanour.' On this day the Emperor of Russia was to dine at Malmaison, but Queen Hortense, rightly alarmed at the state in which she saw her

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mother, decided to send a message to the Emperor Alexander, asking him to be so good as to delay his visit for a few days. At the moment, however, when the courier was on the point of starting, the Czar himself arrived at Malmaison, much before the hour fixed for the dinner to which he had been invited. It was therefore arranged that Alexander's presence should be concealed from the Empress Josephine, so as not to agitate her, and that she should be told that the Russian monarch's visit had been postponed to another day. Queen Hortense dined with the emperor, and, apologising for her want of ceremony, left Alexander alone with Prince Eugène and returned to her mother's side. Mme. d'Arberg watched during this night of 28th to 29th May in Josephine's room. The latter did not seem to be suffering, but often awoke and murmured to herself in a low voice, repeating at intervals the words: "Bonaparte! . . . Elba! . . . Marie-Louise!" * . . .

On the 29th May, Whitsunday, Queen Hortense, greatly alarmed at seeing her mother delirious, went in search of her brother, who had himself been unwell for some days and could only with difficulty leave his bed. Josephine's two children entered their mother's room together and noticed with dismay the great change which had come over her features. 'On seeing her children'—says M. Aubenas—"the empress' eyes filled with tears; she stretched out her arms towards them, but was unable to sit up and could hardly speak, her tongue being

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*.

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paralysed.' After they had both tenderly embraced her, Prince Eugène remained alone by his mother's bedside ; Queen Hortense was unable to master her grief and had to leave the room in order to give vent to her sorrow. It was this devoted son, of whom Josephine was so passionately fond, who, after hearing the report of the physicians, prepared his mother to receive the consolations of religion. A message had been sent to Rueil to find the priest of the parish, but he was not at the Presbytery, and it was the Abbé Bertrand, that old and faithful friend of Josephine and her children, who fulfilled the task of administering the last sacrament to the empress. At the sight of her mother's altered features in these last moments Queen Hortense had fainted away : she had to be carried to her room in a state of unconsciousness. It was in Prince Eugène's presence only that the empress expired, shortly after having received the Church's benediction. 'After a few efforts to breathe'—adds M. Aubenas—'she expired in the arms of her dearly loved son, her last solace.'*

The distress felt by all the Malmaison servants, both high and low, at the death of the Empress Josephine, spread, as the fatal news became known, to Rueil and all the neighbouring localities, where she was looked upon as a guardian angel, and loved as a mother. 'Between the fatal day of the empress' death and the 2nd June, when the funeral was to take place,' writes Mme. Ducrest, 'more than twenty thousand persons saw Josephine for the last time.'

* Aubenas, vol. ii, p. 559.

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On the 2nd June, at mid-day, the funeral took place with the greatest pomp, in the small and unpretending church of Rueil village, the parish church of Malmaison.

The corners of the pall were carried by the Grand-Duke of Baden, husband of Princess Stephanie, the Marquis de Beauharnais, the empress' step-brother, Count Tascher, her first cousin, and Count de Beauharnais, father of the Grand-Duchess of Baden. Queen Hortense's two young children were chief mourners. Then, on foot, at the head of the procession, and preceding the members of the empress' household, came General Sacken, representing the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia's adjutant-general, on behalf of his sovereign, and a large number of foreign princes and French field-m Marshals, generals, and officers. The Emperor Alexander had at first announced his intention of being present in person at the obsequies, but on hearing that Prince Eugène's state of health would not allow of his presiding at the funeral, the Czar had abstained from doing so. The banners of the different brotherhoods of the parish of Rueil, and twenty young girls dressed in white, singing hymns, formed part of the procession, which was flanked by files of Russian hussars and National Guards. Two thousand poor persons of all ages brought up the rear.

Josephine's body, placed in a leaden chest enclosed in a wooden coffin, was afterwards laid provisionally in a part of the cemetery where had been interred the bodies of the 103 persons who had been crushed to

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death in the Rue Royale on their return from the fireworks in the square of Louis XV, on the occasion of Louis XVI's marriage with Marie-Antoinette.*

Monseigneur de Barral, Archbishop of Tours, and the empress' principal chaplain, had presided at the funeral ceremony, assisted by the bishops of Evreux and Versailles. This prelate had also, after reading the Gospel, pronounced the funeral oration on Napoleon's first wife in a quiet but touching manner.

In 1824 Queen Hortense and her brother bought one of the chapels of the Rueil church, and succeeded at last, though not without difficulty, in obtaining permission to erect over her grave a monument that may still be seen there.

The following observations, made by General de Reiset in 1814, were suggested by the news of the Empress Josephine's sudden and unexpected decease :

'Everyone is unanimous,' this general officer wrote in his *Souvenirs*, 'in deploring the death of this charming woman, who was a paragon of goodness, and whose whole life was spent in the service of others. When she was at the height of her power she never used her influence except for good ends, and I do not think she ever had an enemy.'

Further on he says :

'The grief she experienced on seeing Napoleon, whom she never ceased to love, dethroned and exiled, and her anxiety for her children's future, now that the Empire was abolished, all these causes had combined to depress her profoundly.'

* Madame Ducrest, *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*.

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We may quote, as a last extract from these *Souvenirs*, a paragraph in which the Viscount de Reiset sums up the general impression which Josephine's death made on her contemporaries :

'The whole of Paris has been deeply affected by the empress' death ; for long she had been known only as *the good Josephine*, and she had rendered so many services to all and sundry that the regrets she inspired are unanimous and without distinction of parties.'*

* *Souvenirs du vicomte de Reiset*, 3 Vols.

CHAPTER XXII

IT is a striking fact and one deserving of notice, that the death of the Empress Josephine occurred quite unexpectedly at the most critical period of Napoleon's wonderful career. It would almost seem as if Providence, when it pleased Him to paralyse the mighty instrument of His impenetrable designs, intended to render still more complete the immolation of Napoleon, that Prometheus of modern times. The mysterious Power which governs the world refused to permit any soothing influence to alleviate the emperor's sufferings on the rock of his exile, or to comfort him on his deathbed. The great man's first wife, who was so sincerely and profoundly attached to him, would in all probability have obtained permission from the foreign monarchs to go and console him at St Helena, if death had not cut short her days. And yet it was this consort whom the emperor had abandoned in order to ensure, as he thought, the accomplishment of his ambitious dynastic designs! His second wife, the Empress Marie-Louise, on whose feelings he had thought he could rely, forgot Napoleon in his misfortunes,

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separated herself from him, refused him any kind of assistance and gave no sign of remembrance or of interest in his fate. Certainly this extraordinary genius, whose wonderful history will excite the imagination of generations yet unborn, was destined to expiate most tragically the faults, whatever they were, committed by him in the course of his stormy career!

Even Cardinal Fesch, in an interview which has been placed on record, remarked,* when speaking of Napoleon, his nephew :

‘God did not destroy him. Holy Scripture speaks clearly on this subject. When the Almighty wills a man’s perdition, He crushes him on the spot and consigns him to the flames ; but this man He did not trample under foot, nor consign to the flames. . . . He *humiliated* him, and this is the way of salvation and the token of it. . . . He whom God humiliates is saved, for humiliation is the expiation for the sin and the sign of mercy !’

In 1815—about a year after Josephine’s death—Napoleon, on his return to France during the Hundred Days, made a pilgrimage to Malmaison before starting on his last campaign, which was to terminate at Waterloo. Queen Hortense, always faithful to the emperor’s fortunes, was there to receive him. ‘The emperor,’ says M. Aubenas, ‘arrived accompanied by M. Molé, M. Denon and Colonel Labédoyère. On entering the hall of the chateau he

* *Sentiments de Napoléon sur le Christianisme*, by the Chevalier de Beauterne.

appeared moved. He wanted to see everything again. He walked for an hour with his step-daughter, in the garden, the park, the conservatory, speaking of her whose memory filled this abode that had been created by her genius. It seemed to him every moment as if she was about to appear at the turn of a path! They partook of lunch in silence. Afterwards the emperor wandered slowly through the gallery, gazing with a sad but sweet pleasure at the pictures and works of art of which she had been fond. He then expressed a wish to see the room where Josephine had died. The queen prepared to accompany him upstairs, but he motioned to her with his hand to remain, and proceeded alone to this apartment which he knew so well. He remained a few moments standing by the bed where the woman he had loved so dearly had died thinking of him, and then descended the stairs again, the victim of an emotion that he no longer sought to hide.*

‘The Emperor,’ writes M. de Las Cases, in the *Mémorial*, ‘used to say that he had had a great deal to do during his life with two women of very different characters : one the embodiment of art and the graces, the other of innocence and simplicity ; and each of them had her value.’ One might add to this that the former was all heart and affection, while the vaunted innocence of the latter was only a transitory quality, and it was never affection that had the upperhand in her ungrateful character, but egoism.

M. de Bausset, in his *Mémoires*, after saying

* Aubenas, *Histoire de l'impératrice Joséphine*, vol. ii, pp. 561-562.

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that it would have been impossible for Josephine to exhibit more grace than she shewed in her manners and deportment, adds: 'Her eyes and her look were bewitching, her smile full of charm; her features and her voice were of an extreme sweetness, her figure was perfectly moulded, supple and queenly; she dressed in the most perfect taste and with the greatest elegance, so that she appeared much younger than she really was. But all these outward graces were as nothing in comparison with the goodness of her heart. She was by nature amiable and cheerful, never hurt any one's sensibilities, nor said disagreeable things; her character was always placid and good-tempered. Devoted to Napoleon, she inspired him, without his perceiving it, with her own sweetness and generosity, and laughingly gave him advice, which on more than one occasion proved of use to him. At the risk of repeating myself, I may say that, while she was herself always ready to oblige others, she taught Napoleon the value of indulgence and kindness, and further, that I know no one who could say that she ever refused to do a service or to offer assistance in any matters which came within her sphere. Blessings and prayers for her welfare followed her in her downfall, and later on the great European Powers vied with each other in associating themselves by their acts of homage with the feelings of reverence of the whole French people. More than any woman I have known, she had that taste for society, which is generally the attribute of women as gifted as she was. Nature had endowed her with an intuitive perception of what

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was true and good. Few women have possessed to the same degree that delicacy of feeling which makes them forgetful of self and intent on the welfare of the object dear to them ; that patience, that true courage, that calmness in the presence of overwhelming misfortune ; that high-minded generosity which dislikes all ostentation ; that refinement and ingenuity in the manner of conferring a favour ; that consistency and perseverance, as I may call it, in the will to oblige ; and lastly that sensitive nature which made her ambitious of no reward except the well-merited reciprocation of the kindly sentiments by which she was herself actuated.*

‘The Empress Josephine,’ wrote the Duke of Rovigo, ‘abdicated the throne with great resignation, and declared that the loss of her grandeur was made up to her by the consolation she derived from having obeyed the emperor’s will. She left the Court, but lived on in the hearts of her friends ; she had always been loved, because there had never been her equal for kindness. Her thoughtfulness for everyone was the same when she became empress as it had been before ; she was lavish in her gifts and so gracious in her manner of giving that one would have felt oneself guilty of rudeness in not accepting her bounty : no one ever obtained access to her without returning loaded with presents. She never did any one an ill turn in the time of her power ; even her enemies were protected by her ; there was hardly a day of her life that

* *Mémoires anecdotiques sur l'intérieur du palais impérial*, by L. G.-F. de Bausset, vol. i, p. 375.

she did not ask some favour on behalf of some one, with whom often she was not even acquainted, but whom she knew only to be worthy of her interest ; she provided for a large number of families, and during the last years of her life she was surrounded by a whole generation of children, whose mothers had been married and dowered by her bounty. Malicious tongues reproached her with a certain extravagance in her expenditure ; should she be blamed for this ? No one has been equally zealous in counting the number of children of poor parents, for whose education she paid ; no one has spoken of the charities she dispensed in many destitute homes. Her whole day was spent in thinking much of others and very little of herself. Every one regretted her on the emperor's account, because it was known that she hardly ever told him anything but good about all who were in his service. She even did M. Fouché services, although he had endeavoured to make himself the instrument for promoting her divorce a year earlier than it actually took place.*

M. de Méneval expresses himself with reference to the empress in the following terms : ' Josephine possessed in herself an irresistible fascination ; she was not actually beautiful, but she had that grace which, as La Fontaine says, is more beautiful than beauty. She had the soft *abandon* and the graceful listlessness of the Creole. Her temper was even ; she was sweet and kindly, affable and indulgent with every one, without distinction of persons. She possessed neither genius nor much learning, but her exquisite courtesy,

* Rovigo, *Mémoires*, vol. iv, p. 257.

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her great knowledge of the world and the Court, and of their innocent artificialities, always gave her at command an intuitive perception of what was the right thing to say or to do.

‘The emperor had loved her dearly and retained for her a feeling of affection which habit and her lovable qualities had intensified. One would have said that she was born for the rôle imposed upon her by the exalted station to which she had climbed along with him. A partner of his fortunes, she had seconded him admirably by the ascendancy of her grace, her sweetness and her beauty ; she had wedded his glory as well as himself. Although a complete stranger to politics and affairs of state, she had conciliated to Napoleon, as far as it lay in her power, the favour of all parties. She was fond of luxury and of spending money, more so perhaps than her charitable disposition should have permitted her to be ; for her extravagance often prevented her from satisfying her philanthropic desires, although on many occasions Napoleon generously rescued her from the consequences of her too great prodigality. There was a charm and a delicacy about her manner of rendering or acknowledging a service which won people’s hearts. She shewed in her misfortunes a resignation which never belied itself ; what aggravated the burden of her grief was the inexorable necessity of separating from the emperor, although he never neglected her.’*

The majority of the Empress Josephine’s con-

* Méneval, *Mémoires*, vol. ii, pp. 289-290.

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temporaries have been unanimous, as we have seen, in according her a well-merited tribute of praise. This praise has however been mingled with certain criticisms. Her excessive prodigality and the luxurious scale on which she found it necessary to live have given a handle to her detractors. She has also been reproached with want of discrimination in her manner of doing a service ; but this reproach loses its force when we remember that she was always rather the benefactress of humble folk than of persons of rank, who courted her for her power. Josephine has also been accused of devoting herself to superstitious, not to say childish, practices. In any case this peculiarity hurt no one, besides which, she was a woman, and the prophecy at Martinique, of which Mlle. de la Pagerie had been the object, may possibly have contributed to strengthen this propensity in her. Besides, it happens not infrequently that even master minds, swayed by too lively an imagination, are victims of this failing. Historians should be permitted to modify their delineation of the persons they are describing only to give greater prominence to their good qualities, but not in order to impute to the dead serious and imaginary faults ! In works which pretend to be historical it is generally the opposite which happens ; writers seek to conceal the good and to exaggerate the bad. An author wields a dangerous weapon in his pen ; he strikes the dead without pausing to reflect how his slanders add to the grief of the living relatives ; it would be better, if lies must be told, that the living only be attacked, as they

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at least have the means of refuting the falsehoods of which they are the victims. Josephine was not perhaps a heroine, but at least she was never the degraded creature which she has too often been painted.

If Josephine really was the seductive monster of hypocrisy, which several authors describe her as being, though no proofs are offered in support of the theory, how is it that she brought up her children so admirably? For it was certainly she alone who formed their characters, their father having died on the scaffold at a time when they were still of tender years. How is it that Eugène and Hortense were able to derive from their mother's teachings such perfect tact, such dignity, such high-mindedness, all qualities of the first order, and possessed to the same degree by very few of the members of Napoleon's family? How can we explain the fact that Josephine's children always worshipped their mother, while she was alive as well as after her decease, if the hypothesis, which represents her as one of the most selfish and perfidious of women, were a true one? Beugnot, a man generally admitted to be possessed of keen perception of character, who knew Josephine, and was often in her company, was of the opinion that Napoleon's first wife was *sincere*. The opposite theory, which describes Josephine as a profoundly false and immoral creature, has only been propounded by some of our contemporaries, whose statements can never, in our opinion, have the value belonging to the testimony of an authorised historian who lived in Josephine's immediate *entourage*. The writings of all who have known her and have been admitted to her presence are

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indeed unanimous in representing her, as the reader has seen, in a light absolutely at variance with the assertions of these critics. All are agreed in declaring her to be an essentially good woman, charitable without ostentation, devoid of malice and even of bitterness against those who tried to injure her, at a time when it would have been easy for the empress to revenge herself on them. That Josephine often dispensed her favours somewhat indiscriminately we are not prepared to deny, but the sovereign's rôle demands, more than any other, a certain indiscriminate distribution of civil speeches and gracious commonplaces. That she was frivolous, extravagant and too wanting in seriousness on certain grave occasions, is also a fact that is unfortunately not to be denied ; but that she never truly loved either her children or Napoleon, her husband and her benefactor, is an accusation which is contradicted by the continual proofs of devotion which she gave them, in fact by the whole history of her life. A good parent, a still more excellent friend, Josephine was neither false nor egotistical. A proof that she was not false is the instinctive antipathy she felt for characters like that of Talleyrand ; she loved sincerity, and thus she helped to make her son, Prince Eugène, the most upright and loyal of all the great men of the first Empire. Queen Hortense's mother does not, we think, deserve, in the great sphere in which she moved, the reputation for duplicity with which some authors of the present day have attempted to brand her. She shewed herself on the contrary steadfast and sincere in her affections both

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in her days of prosperity and in her hours of trial and adversity. Her infinite tenderness for her children never belied itself, and her solicitude, even to her last breath, was solely for the son and daughter who were so exclusively the objects of her love. The narrative of the last moments of Josephine's existence presents overwhelming evidence of her maternal affection ; she would not occupy herself with thoughts of her own fate during the course of those last weeks which preceded her death, but only shewed anxiety as to the fortunes of her dearly loved children, which were now so gravely compromised.

In spite of all the reproaches, whether merited or unmerited, with which she has been assailed, Josephine will remain, in the remembrance of the nation, one of the most dearly loved sovereigns in the history of France. She was Napoleon's good genius, for his strength of character required her sweetness to temper it. In spite of the efforts of the iconoclasts, who have tried to mutilate the features of the gracious Creole, Josephine will ever remain *the good Empress* for those who place above all other qualities, those that belong to the heart : gentleness, benevolence and goodness.

APPENDIX

IN 1824 Queen Hortense and Prince Eugène bought one of the chapels of the church at Rueil and there erected their mother's tombstone. The monument, which was executed by Gilet and Dubuc according to the drawings of the architect Bertrand, is of veined white marble, and consists of a semi-circular vault, ornamented with roses, and supported by four Ionic columns, on a pedestal two metres in height. The columns are four metres high and the archivolt three metres. The empress' remains are placed in the base of the plinth. They are enclosed in three coffins, one of lead, the second of mahogany and the third of oak.

The plinth bears the following inscription, with sunk gilt letters :

A JOSEPHINE
EUGENE ET HORTENSE
1825

A statue of Carrara marble, the work of Cartellier, represents Josephine in Court dress. She is kneeling on a cushion near a *prie-Dieu*, which is much too

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small. This statue, in the opinion of those who knew the empress, resembles her perfectly.

In the ancient chapel of the Lords of Buzenval, in a vault built beneath the chapel, lie the remains of Queen Hortense, who died on the 5th October 1837 at her chateau of Arenenberg on the shore of the Lake of Constance, and whose body was transferred to Rueil by Count Tascher de la Pagerie, her mother's uncle, on the 19th November of the same year.

The tomb erected by the Emperor Napoleon III to his mother was completed in 1857. It bears the inscription :

A LA REINE HORTENSE

SON FILS

NAPOLEON III

We shall complete this appendix by copies of extracts from two letters, addressed by Baron de Méneval, the private secretary of the Empress Marie-Louise, to his wife. These letters are written from Schönbrunn, and refer to the Empress Josephine's death, the news of which had just reached Vienna.

FIRST LETTER

‘Schönbrunn, 10th June 1814.

‘I learned yesterday the sad news of the death of the excellent Empress Josephine. I could not help expressing my feelings of deep regret even to Her

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Majesty, who, although she has no cause to regret her, still shewed her sympathy for such a sudden and premature end. What you write as to Prince Eugène's illness, and his having probably contracted it in nursing his mother, has affected me profoundly. Truly nothing further is needed to render this high-minded prince the perfect model of all the virtues than that he should fall a victim to his filial piety.'

SECOND LETTER

'Schönbrunn, 15th June 1814.

'Everything you tell me about the good Empress Josephine is exactly in accordance with my own opinion. What a fate has been reserved for everything that belonged to the emperor! One is so awe-struck by each event as it presents itself that one does not notice the logical sequence which characterises them all. Without wishing to philosophise, one cannot help one's imagination being deeply impressed and even appalled as to the future.'

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