





THE
EMPRESS
JOSEPHINE



PHILIP W.
SERGEANT



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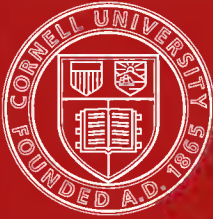
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THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

VOL. II



From Levy's set. pub.

The Empress Josephine at Malmaison.

After the picture by Prudhon in the Louvre.

THE
EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

NAPOLEON'S ENCHANTRESS

By

PHILIP W. SERGEANT

Author of "The Last Empress of the French," etc.

WITH 34 ILLUSTRATIONS

Vol. II

New York
DODD, MEAD & CO.
372 FIFTH AVENUE
1909

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

CHAPTER XVII

THE COMING OF EMPIRE

THE year now commencing was one of great anxiety at its beginning and of great splendour at its close ; and in both anxiety and splendour Josephine had her full share. Rumours of a Royalist conspiracy were rife in the early days of January. Nor were they without a very solid foundation. “ Just imagine,” wrote Josephine to her daughter in February, “ Georges has been in Paris and its neighbourhood since August ; really it makes one shudder.” Georges, of course, was the notorious Georges Cadoudal, the Chouan leader, who had remained in England during the Peace of Amiens but had returned to France in the summer of 1803 with a band of followers sworn to assassinate the First Consul. The approach of grave danger was not concealed

from Napoleon and his Government, and strict precautions were taken in Paris to meet it. One of the principal steps was the removal from his post as Governor of Paris of Junot, who, in spite of his wife's unbounded admiration, was incapable of holding so important an office. His successor was Murat, who was allowed to retain his rank as general and was assigned an additional sixty thousand francs, a similar sum being given to his wife Caroline. Thus another branch of the Bonaparte family was elevated to a responsible post ; and this time a branch at present more favourable to Josephine than the rest.

The strengthening of the Government's defence took place none too soon. Murat was nominated on January 15. On the following day there landed in Normandy a band of exiles from England, including Pichegru, the two Polignacs, and Rivière. With the news of their landing came the report that a high Bourbon prince was implicated in the plot. The prince in question was undoubtedly the Comte d'Artois, brother of the Royalist claimant ; but unhappily, as will be seen, another and almost certainly innocent member of the Bourbon family was suspected.

The plotters did not remain long in security. Certain of their number were somehow tracked down. In the above-quoted letter to Hortense Josephine relates how "the man who was to have been shot and who begged for mercy has revealed important matters." The result of his revelations was the arrest of General Moreau on the night of February 14-15, an event which startled all Paris. In rapid succession Pichegru, Rivière, and the Polignacs were captured, and finally on March 9 Georges Cadoudal. The police, under the direction of Savary, had timed their strokes admirably to surround the whole gang.

In the Memoirs of Mme. de Rémusat we are given some insight into the feelings of Josephine at this anxious epoch. On the night before Moreau's arrest Napoleon revealed to her his intention. He was unable to sleep and walked up and down the room all night. Neither could Josephine sleep after she had been told, and the marks of tears were plain upon her face next morning. Looking at her, Napoleon took her by the chin, lifted up her head, and said: "Now, now! Not every one has a good wife as I have. You are weeping, Josephine.

Why? Are you afraid?" "No," she answered, "but I don't like what people will say." "What do you want? I feel no hatred, no desire for revenge. I have reflected long before having Moreau arrested. I could have shut my eyes and given him time to escape. But they would have said I did not dare to put him on trial."

Napoleon had reason on his side, touching the arrest of his would-be assassins. His next step was one which had the result of blackening his fame more than any act of his whole life. It is not the place here, however, to discuss the case of the Duc d'Enghien. We are only concerned in the affair so far as it affected Josephine. On March 18, which was Passion Sunday, Napoleon and his wife heard Mass at the Tuileries and then drove out to Malmaison. Here it had been arranged that they should spend a week—to Josephine's great relief, for the high feeling prevailing in Paris over the arrests caused her considerable alarm. Napoleon went on ahead, only Mme. de Rémusat riding with her in her carriage. So silent was Josephine that at length her lady-in-waiting expressed her concern. Josephine looked at

her for some moments without speaking and then said: "I am going to tell you a great secret. Bonaparte told me this morning that he had sent M. de Caulaincourt across our frontier to seize the Duc d'Enghien." "Good heavens, madame, what are they going to do with him?" "It seems to me he will be put on his trial." Mme. de Rémusat turned so pale that Josephine kindly lowered the carriage window to give her air, fearing she might faint. "I have done all I could," she said, "to make Bonaparte promise that the Prince shall not die. But I very much fear that his mind is made up." "What!" exclaimed the other, "you think he will put him to death?" "I am afraid so." Mme. de Rémusat says that she began to weep and told Josephine how she dreaded the hatred which such a deed would cause to break out against Napoleon. As she listened her mistress herself became more and more agitated, and when she arrived at Malmaison she was in as bad a state of nerves as her lady. This was but natural, for Josephine had at least as much regard as Mme. de Rémusat for the Bourbons.

In spite of her trouble, however, Josephine

acted with prudence at this moment. She told Mme. de Rémusat to retire to her room, so that Napoleon might not guess that his confidence had been betrayed, and she went to him herself to make an appeal for mercy. He was unyielding. On the following day Josephine went out early into the park, where she directed the transplantation of a tree. It was a cypress. Mme. de Rémusat watched her throwing a few handfuls of soil upon the roots when the work was done and exclaimed how appropriate was such a tree for such a day. But Josephine, in spite of her gardening, had not dismissed the unhappy Duke from her mind. Making another attempt to wring mercy from Napoleon, she had the courage to force her way into his presence and reopen the question. The scene was not at all to Napoleon's taste. "Go away," he kept on saying, "you are a child, you understand nothing about political necessities." At last she abandoned her attempt. As she withdrew from the room she cried to him: "Well, Bonaparte, if you have your prisoner killed, you will be guillotined yourself like my first husband; and this time I shall bear you₂ company." The last words

betray a personal fear which was perhaps excusable in the circumstances ; and heroic self-forgetfulness did not enter into Josephine's composition.

The fatal hour was approaching, unknown to any one at Malmaison except the First Consul himself. On the Tuesday evening, when dinner was over, Napoleon left the table to amuse himself for a while with Hortense's infant son, whom she and Louis had brought with them to Malmaison. Josephine looked pleased at this playful humour and glanced at Mme. de Rémusat, as if to indicate that there was still hope of mercy. Mme. de Rémusat, however, was looking so white that she attracted the attention of Napoleon, who addressed to her one of those characteristic speeches of his to ladies : "Why haven't you got any rouge on? You are too pale." She had forgotten it, she replied. "What, a woman forget her rouge? That will never happen to you, Josephine. There are two things which become women very well, rouge and tears." These were certainly two things to which Josephine had accustomed her husband. This evening she plainly met with his approval, for he began

to be very demonstrative of his affection to her—unconventionally so, according to Mme. de Rémusat. Was it because of the remorse or uneasiness which he felt at disregarding her appeals on behalf of his prisoner? After they had gone to bed, he awoke again at five o'clock, and turning to her remarked: "At this hour the Duc d'Enghien has ceased to live." Josephine broke out into loud lamentations. "Come now, try to sleep," he said, "you are only a child."¹

On the following day Malmaison was the centre to which visitors flocked in crowds from Paris. The first arrival was Savary, fresh from Vincennes. He had a private interview with Napoleon and then came out into the *salon*. "Is it all over?" cried Josephine to him, her arms falling sadly to her sides. "Yes, madame, he died this morning, and with a fine display of courage, I must admit." Savary went on to relate how the soldiers who had shot him had refused to avail themselves of

¹ This also is Mme. de Rémusat's account, presumably based upon Josephine's confidences. It does not agree with the versions which make the execution of Enghien take place without a direct command from Napoleon.



NAPOLEON BONAPARTE AT MALMAISON.

From an engraving after the picture by Isabey.

permission to divide the young Duke's personal belongings among themselves. As he told the tale, others began to arrive. Among the first was Eugène Beauharnais, who apparently had not yet heard the news. In his Memoirs he thus describes the scene between Napoleon, when he came out from his study, and Josephine :

“ My mother was all in tears and uttered the fiercest reproaches against the First Consul, who listened to her in silence. She told him that it was an atrocious deed, from the stain of which he could never cleanse himself, and that he had yielded to the treacherous advice of his enemies, who were delighted to be able to spoil the history of his life with so horrible a page. The First Consul withdrew to his study, and a few minutes later Caulaincourt arrived from Strasbourg. He was astonished at the distress of my mother, who hastened to tell him the cause. At the fatal news Caulaincourt smote his forehead and tore his hair, crying : ‘ Oh, why must I have been mixed up in this disastrous expedition ? ’ ”

More visitors followed, among them a number of generals, to whom the execution at Vincennes

he was very pale, while Josephine was visibly trembling. Napoleon looked round at the faces of the party, says Mme. de Rémusat, as if to inquire how they thought he would be received. "At last he went in, with the air of a man advancing under the fire of a battery. He was welcomed as usual, whether because the sight of him produced its ordinary effect or because the police had taken their precautions beforehand."

And indeed the execution of the Duc d'Enghien seemed to produce no ill effects in France, however much it revolted the feelings of Europe. Napoleon himself declared that his policy had been successful, and he afterwards wrote: "From this time onward conspiracies ceased." The "Moniteur" was full of addresses from the army and the country, congratulating the First Consul on his happy escape. It was felt possible to show leniency to the prisoners arrested in Paris. Cadoudal was executed, it is true; but Rivière and the two Polignacs, though condemned to death, were pardoned. Josephine's pleadings were largely responsible for Armand de Polignac's reprieve, it was said, for she was a friend of

his wife. Moreau was sentenced to two years' imprisonment only and subsequent deportation. He had not won the battle of Hohenlinden to no purpose. Pichegru, by strangling himself in prison, put himself out of the way. They had all conspired in vain, and those that lived only saw the coming of the Empire hastened by their plot. On March 27 the Senate, in the course of a fervent address to the First Consul, said: "You have brought us out of the chaos of the past. You have made us bless the benefits of the present. Guarantee for us the future. Great man, complete your work and make it as immortal as your glory!" Napoleon for the moment made no more decided reply than that he would reflect upon the matter; but no one could have had any doubts as to what the results of his reflection would be.

The great public bodies were in eager competition to hasten his decision. The Tribunate was first in the field with a proposal of hereditary empire at the end of April, and on May 3 the proposal was passed with Carnot, the ex-Director, alone dissenting. The Council of State, the Legislative Body, and the Senate were not far behind; the last-named on May 18

put forth a *senatus consultum*, proposing to the people the question whether hereditary Imperial dignity should be conferred on "the direct, natural, legitimate, and adoptive descendants of Napoleon Bonaparte, and on the direct, natural, legitimate descendants of Joseph Bonaparte and Louis Bonaparte."

Immediately after carrying their resolution, the Senators made all haste in their carriages to reach Saint-Cloud, where the First Consul was at the time residing. They must be the first to congratulate him on his new rank. They found him standing in his military uniform in the Gallery of Apollo, awaiting their arrival, with Josephine at his side. Cambacères, whose post as Second Consul was soon to be exchanged for another of more real dignity if of less apparent power, addressed Napoleon on behalf of the Senators and at the end of his speech proclaimed him "Emperor of the French." His listener had reflected, according to his promise; and he now accepted what the Senate offered him, submitting to the decision of the nation the question as to the principle of heredity. Cambacères then turned to Josephine and addressed her in these words :

“Madame, there remains a very agreeable duty for the Senate to perform—to offer to Your Imperial Majesty the tribute of its respect and the expression of France’s gratitude. Yes, madame, Fame publishes abroad tidings of the good which you never cease to do. She tells how you, ever accessible to the unfortunate, only use your influence with the head of the State to relieve their misery, and how to the pleasure of conferring an obligation Your Majesty adds a lovable delicacy which makes gratitude all the sweeter and a good action all the more precious. It is clear from this that the name of Josephine will always stand for consolation and hope, and that, just as the virtues of Napoleon will always serve as examples to his successors to instruct them in the art of governing nations, so the living memory of your kindness will teach the august sharers of these successors’ fortunes that the surest way to reign over hearts is care in the drying of tears. The Senate congratulates itself on being the first to greet Your Imperial Majesty, and he who has the honour to be its spokesman dares to hope that you will deign to reckon him in the number of your most faithful servants.”

Napoleon and Josephine were Emperor and Empress. Constant writes that every one at Saint-Cloud this day was drunk with joy. In the ante-chamber as well as in the *salon* all were embracing and congratulating one another and discussing their hopes and plans. A heavy storm raged outside, but no one took any notice of the bad omen. Had any one been affected, we may be sure that it would have been the superstitious Josephine. She might well forget, however, to think of omens from the weather on a day of such glorious fortune. Nor could her contentment be lessened by the fact that among the Bonapartes, who had resented so much her intrusion into their family, the joy was by no means as great. Lucien was in disgrace and exile in Rome ;¹ Mme. Letizia was there with him, resenting Napoleon's attitude over his brother's second marriage ; Pauline (the name Paulette was no longer dignified enough) was also in Italy,

¹ Jerome, like Lucien, was in disgrace, owing to his marriage with Elizabeth Patterson in December 1803, and, like Lucien too, was cut out of the succession. But Josephine had less reason to dislike him than his brothers, and indeed she had treated him with affection and indulgence when, in his school-days, he came to spend some of his vacations in the rue Chantierine. An unsupported rumour made her view him as a possible husband for Hortense before she thought of Louis.

not yet forgiven by Napoleon ; and Joseph and Louis were by no means pleased at the terms of the Senate's decree, which made not themselves but only their descendants heirs after Napoleon's legitimate or adoptive children.

The discontent of the Bonaparte ladies was very soon shown. On the night of the Senate's mission to Saint-Cloud, Napoleon gave a dinner-party to his family and a number of other guests. Before they went in to dinner, Duroc, as Grand Marshal of the Palace, announced to Joseph and Louis the fact that they were to be styled henceforward princes and their wives princesses. The sensation was great, and none were more affected by it than Elisa Bacciochi and Caroline Murat. At 6 o'clock Napoleon appeared with Josephine and began to use the new titles at once. The Empress was very amiable and disguised her elation. But Caroline, although her husband was now a Marshal of the Empire, could hardly contain herself. At table she was observed to be on the verge of tears at each mention of the Princess Julie and the Princess Hortense, and to be constantly taking long draughts of cold water. Elisa, who had become more friendly to Napoleon since Lucien

had disgusted her by taking to wife the widow Joubertou, was more calm than Caroline, but was very haughty and brusque in her manner toward the other guests. At length Napoleon grew irritated at his sisters' conduct and indulged in many indirect hits at them. The presence of strangers, however, prevented an open scene that night.

On the following day a smaller dinner took place at Saint-Cloud. On this occasion Caroline broke into complaints, and demanded of Napoleon why she and Elisa should be condemned to obscurity, while strangers were loaded with honours. Napoleon answered harshly, and suggested that it might be thought he had "stolen the inheritance of their late father the King." Caroline's rage overcame her and she fell on the ground in a faint. Napoleon was immediately softened and helped to restore her; and on the following day, May 20, it was announced in the "Moniteur" that the Emperor's three sisters were to be granted the title of Imperial Highness. Even Pauline, therefore, was not deprived of the benefits of Caroline's protest, and only Lucien and Jerome remained under a cloud.

Josephine had become Empress of the French without any disagreeable necessity of fighting for her dignity. There still remained to trouble her joy the fact that Napoleon wanted an heir. His assumption of the title of Emperor had altered the situation. As First Consul he could not nominate a child as his successor, even if the power of nomination were put in his hands. Hence the idea which he entertained of making Louis his heir. But, with an Emperor on the throne, the presence of a youthful heir-apparent to be trained up to succeed his father, real or adoptive, was the natural thing. The advantages of an adult successor, such as Louis, were much less than formerly ; more especially since Louis had by no means commended himself to his brother by his conduct toward Hortense. Joseph was still less suitable than Louis, on account of his weakness of character. Had Eugène only been a Bonaparte instead of a Beauharnais, his claim would be preferable to all others ; but the arguments against going outside the immediate family circle were too strong to be disregarded.

If the heir were to be a child, where was that child to be found ? Josephine was now over

forty, so that the idea of a son by her to Napoleon might well be put aside. If she were not to be divorced, the child must come from another Bonaparte. Since Lucien and Jerome had both by their marriages made themselves impossible in the eyes of Napoleon, there were only Joseph and Louis. Joseph had daughters, but no son. Thus there was but Louis left. In favour of his infant boy Napoleon-Charles there were several points, more especially that Napoleon was very fond of him and that he was Josephine's grandchild. Might he not further become the Emperor's son by adoption? This idea occurred to Napoleon before his own elevation to the throne. It might have been successfully carried into practice but for the intervention of Joseph. It appears that in April 1804 Napoleon took Josephine with him to call on Louis in his Paris home. Louis was out when they arrived, and only returned in time to prevent their going without seeing him. He was at a loss to guess the reason of the visit. The First Consul was very embarrassed and did not enlighten him, until Josephine, taking him aside, explained to him that a great scheme was to be communicated to him and that he must show himself to be a



PRINCE NAPOLEON CHARLES.
From an engraving by P. Paquet.

man. It was then divulged to him that a law of inheritance was in preparation whereby the succession could only pass from Napoleon to members of the family sixteen years junior to him. Napoleon-Charles fulfilled the conditions. Would not the prospect of his son becoming Emperor one day console Louis for being left out of the succession himself? Louis seemed inclined to listen to the offer. On the following day, however, he called upon Joseph. The latter, who led the opposition in the family in Lucien's absence, was indignant at a scheme which cut him out as well as Louis, and reminded his younger brother of the stories about Hortense at the time of her marriage. Anyhow, the child was half a Beauharnais, and probably he would be taken away from his father to be educated as heir-apparent. After listening to his elder's views, Louis was determined not to agree to what he was asked, and refused to "give up" his child.

So the matter stood when the Senate came to announce to Napoleon on May 18 that the question of hereditary Empire was to be submitted to a plebiscite of the nation. The plebiscite was taken, and by it the Imperial

dignity was declared hereditary in the direct, natural, legitimate, and adoptive descent of Napoleon and in the direct, natural, and legitimate descent of his two brothers. Joseph's and Louis's fears were realised, and they saw themselves, equally with the offending Lucien and Jerome, debarred from the succession, with their only consolations the title of Imperial Highness and the possibility of one day being father to the Emperor-designate.

It was certainly Josephine's day. By a wise silence, in which she was joined by Eugène and Hortense, she gained more than the Bonapartes, whether Joseph or Louis, Caroline or Elisa, gained by their demands from Napoleon. Josephine, as M. Masson says,¹ asked for nothing, except occasionally for money—and, strictly speaking, not for money, whose value she did not know and which she could not save. She only asked to be relieved of her debts, because her creditors worried her. Otherwise she took whatever her husband pleased to give her, and showed no jealousy of his generosity to others. She did, it is true, insist on one thing—her rights as a wife. The consequence was that Napoleon,

¹ "Napoléon et sa Famille," ii. 423.

suspecting her jealousy about him,¹ tried to anticipate her wishes and give her whatever she might want. He grew less and less ready to divorce her, in spite of his brothers' wishes. Between his submissive, and apparently jealously fond, wife and his own family, eager to get what they could from him, he inclined steadily more toward her side. He was led to protect her against his own kin and to determine that she should be elevated with him to whatever eminence he might attain.

¹ It was rather a case of knowledge than of suspicion, as we have seen.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE EMPRESS AT HOME

NOW that the story of Josephine has reached the point when she is firmly established in the position of Empress of the French, it seems appropriate to devote a little space to the description of her surroundings—the setting, as it were, of the scene in which she was the central figure. In the opening pages of his “*Joséphine, Impératrice et Reine*,” M. Masson gives an excellent and elaborate analysis of the Empress’s movements during the five years and seven months while she was on the throne. Of all this time she spent barely twelve months at the Tuileries and thirteen at Saint-Cloud. Eight months were passed at Malmaison, three and a half at Fontainebleau, one at Rambouillet. These periods were by no means consecutive. Her sojourns in Paris were divided up into three months in the winter of 1804–5, two in 1806, two in 1807, three in 1808, and three twice over in



THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE.

From an engraving after the picture by François Gérard.

1809. It took seven visits to Saint-Cloud to make up her thirteen months there, and five to Rambouillet for the one month there. The rest of her time was divided between seasons at the waters of Plombières and Aix-la-Chapelle, six months in all at Strasbourg and four at Mayence, and journeys to various parts of Germany, Italy, Belgium, and provincial France. In fact, she was in a never-ending state of movement. Yet, while she whirled about, the background remained strangely the same. In every palace were the same heavy gilded chairs placed against the wall in fixed numbers, the same solid tables carrying ponderous vases, the same dusky panels on the walls showing nothing distinguishable except the flesh of huge allegorical figures. There was nothing personal, nothing of the charm and intimacy of a home in these "cold and sumptuous inns wherein, with the change of a mere initial or an emblem, all their royal guests might lodge indifferently, whatever their race or country, their tastes or desires."¹

Owing to this absence of personal interest, it does not seem necessary here to pay much attention to the details of the arrangement of the

¹ M. Masson, "Joséphine, Impératrice et Reine," 4.

Tuileries Palace, which have, moreover, been so often described, both under the rule of the two Napoleons and under that of the Bourbons. In an earlier chapter it has been mentioned that the Empress occupied the ground floor and the Emperor the first floor, a private staircase leading from a wardrobe next his study to her rooms, which, like his, were divided into two sets, the *appartement d'honneur* and the *appartement intérieur*. The inner set, in her case, included her bedroom, dressing-room, boudoir, bathroom, and library ; while an ante-chamber, three *salons*, a dining-room, and a concert-room made up the other. To look after her person and her apartments she had a gradually increasing staff. Her Lady of Honour was the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld ; her Lady of the Bedchamber Mme. Lavalette, her own niece ; her first four Palace Ladies, as already mentioned in Chapter XV., Mmes. de Lauriston, de Luçay, de Rémusat, and de Talhouët, to whom there were subsequently added thirteen others ; and a Reader, whom we never hear of Josephine using until after she had ceased to be reigning Empress. Of the male sex, she had a Grand Almoner with the aristocratic name of de Rohan ;

a First and five other Chamberlains, a First Equerry assisted by two others, and a Secretary. The inferior staff included two principal and four assistant *femmes de chambre*, of whom the principal received six thousand francs a year each for nominal work ; four women and a girl in charge of her wardrobe ; and a number of valets, ushers, pages, etc.

In the midst of this great household, Josephine's manner of life varied but little from day to day. If the Emperor had spent the night with her, it was his custom to leave her as the hour of eight approached and to mount by the private stairs to his own suite. His departure was followed by the arrival of her waiting-women, who slept near her bedroom. The blinds were pulled up, and a glass was brought her of lemonade or whatever she might want. Next, admittance was given to the successor of the lamented Fortuné, who sprang upon the bed from which he was debarred during Napoleon's presence. At nine o'clock she rose and commenced in her dressing-room a toilet which never took less than three hours, it was said. Everything in connection with her washing, hair-dressing, and make-up was of the most

elaborate description. Powder she used in such profusion that it was wont to fall all over her clothes. Rouge she put on all over her cheeks ; her bills for this in 1808 amounted to more than 3,300 francs. She had this much excuse for her artificial complexion, that, while she had naturally a brown skin, she came to Paris at a time when every one of position powdered ; and paint, as is well known, was pleasing to Napoleon, who once remarked to a lady of his Court, " Go and put some rouge on, madame ; you look like a corpse." In another detail, too, she was guided by him. He liked no scents except eau-de-cologne, orange-flower and lavender waters, and she refrained from employing any others.

In comparison with the display of her toilet-table, her dress was of apparent extreme simplicity. In summer especially she wore nearly always a white muslin or cambric gown, while her underclothing was very slight indeed. But simple as her dresses looked, their cost was very high and her stock of them enormous. The muslin or cambric gown was exquisitely embroidered, and might cost her anything up to two thousand francs. Some of the five hundred

chemises in her wardrobe (she changed them three times a day) had lace to the value of two hundred francs.¹ The fact that she never looked overdressed was no proof of her economy, for few women ever spent so much as she upon their clothes.

After her lengthy toilet there was little more freedom for Josephine in the disposal of her time at the Tuileries. Within the Palace all was governed by the strictest etiquette, which appealed to Napoleon as a necessary condition in the life of a new sovereign, above all. The Revolution had put all on an equal footing ; only a rigid etiquette could restore the grades without which he could not make his Court what he wished it to be, the most splendid in Europe. With the aid of his trusted friend Duroc, who, as Grand Marshal, "accomplished miracles," according to Napoleon's own testimony, he contrived that the Tuileries should be a complete school of ceremony, where the only unceremonious person was the master himself.

The Palace of Saint-Cloud had come into the possession of Napoleon with the bestowal upon

¹ M. Masson, in his "Joséphine, Impératrice et Reine," treats the subject of her wardrobe in great detail.

him of the Life Consulship. In spite of its distance from the city proper, it was regarded as a Paris residence, and there was little difference in manner of life and in etiquette between Saint-Cloud and the Tuileries. The rooms even were distributed in much the same way. Josephine's apartments here, however, were at once more modern and more comfortable than those at the Tuileries. She could give a little more scope to her own personal taste, but in the severe judgment of Napoleon the rooms were more appropriate to a *filie entretenue*. The occupations of the day were much the same as at the Tuileries, and the hours, duties, and society varied hardly at all. Life, however, was a little less public, and the environment was more pleasant. A shorter drive brought residents to Malmaison and places of interest. The grounds, too, were much more extensive. There were two parks attached, making about fifteen hundred acres in all, the smaller containing a number of the rare animals in which Josephine delighted, while the larger sheltered enough game to give sportsmen occasional occupation. Thus the monotony which reigned at the Tuileries was somewhat broken at Saint-Cloud.

Away from these two Paris palaces life was not quite so exacting. Fontainebleau was particularly dear to the Emperor, as combining the splendours of the old *régime*, the pomp of the new, and the pleasures of the country. He loved, as did his nephew Napoleon III. after him, to gather together there brilliant crowds of French and foreign guests and to arrange for them an unending programme of entertainment. Unfortunately, his minute attention to details usually ended by making his visitors feel rather like prisoners. The amusements of the Second Empire were often denounced as frivolous ; those of the First Empire could not escape the charge of dulness. The splendidly organised hunts, dances, and concerts, all attended by a wealth of uniform never witnessed anywhere else, produced a feeling of surfeit, and it may be doubted whether any one ever enjoyed the stay at Fontainebleau as much as the host himself. Certainly the hostess did not ; for, though she had somewhat less ceremony to observe than in Paris, on the other hand she had not the milliners and jewellers who helped her to pass some of her hours so pleasantly there.

Nor did Rambouillet delight her more,

charmed as was her husband with the little Royal residence, hardly more than a hunting-box, of former days. To him it appealed as a piece of old France and the scene of the last days of François I. To her it was an extremely uncomfortable house, with bedrooms in which one could hardly stir. Their first visit was paid to it in March 1805, on the way to the Italian Coronation. Napoleon ordered repairs costing half a million francs, and spent further sums later on the furniture and garden. No one dared say anything to him against it, but Josephine let others frankly understand that she "detested it." It was the practice there that after an eleven o'clock breakfast she and the ladies should set themselves to tapestry-work, in keeping with the spirit of old France, of course. The men would start for the hunt at two and return about eight or nine o'clock. Then the Emperor would pull out his watch and say, "I give you ten minutes to dress, ladies. Those who are not ready then must eat with the cats." The men, for the most part, dined in their hunting-clothes, for at Rambouillet the simple life replaced the ceremony which was not absent even at Fontainebleau. A very short dinner was

followed by an hour or two of whist or some other card-game. After some music, the Emperor went off to bed, while the rest of the party remained to talk to the Empress. Even here etiquette compelled the men to stand, so that by one or two o'clock, when the Empress retired, their weariness must have been extreme. On one occasion, in August 1806, when the whole Court by some miracle had been squeezed into Rambouillet, we hear of Josephine giving a rustic ball, with musicians brought down from Paris ; but this was an extraordinary event. Generally speaking, the guests must have found it hard to say whether it was worse to be a man or a woman at Rambouillet.

It was only at Malmaison, the place of her own choice, that Josephine really made a home for herself. Here at least she was in the midst of all her collected treasures and could pursue her hobbies with little restraint. Hither she always preferred to come during the Emperor's absence, although, as we have seen, between the time when she became Empress and the day of her divorce she was able to spend no more than eight months in all at her château. Her association with Malmaison, however, was

very much longer than this, since it included part of the time when Napoleon was in Egypt, part of his First Consulship, and the bulk of the four years after the divorce. At first she only divided control of the place with her husband, who after the 18 *brumaire* was glad, whenever he had any leisure, to come away from Paris and spend the life of a country gentleman here. We hear of him, in the first spring after he became Consul, passing a brief while at Malmaison with Josephine in bourgeois peace, going to bed early while she sat by his feet and read to him ; and in the daytime shutting himself up with his work, while she changed her dresses, received visitors, strolled in the park, or pretended to occupy herself with tapestry-work or her harp. Alterations and repairs of the buildings interested Napoleon so much that he had already spent six hundred thousand francs upon them. But when Saint-Cloud came into his hands he abandoned his care for Malmaison to Josephine, who in the July of 1802 got rid of Napoleon's architects and installed her own man Lepère. Henceforward Malmaison was hers alone, and she devoted to its upkeep and improvement enormous sums, from now onward to the fall of the

Empire, so that Napoleon's extravagance was made to look almost like economy. He had nearly rebuilt the house, and had enlarged the grounds, originally about seventy-five acres in extent. Josephine, taking up the task, completed or reversed the structural alterations, filled the rooms with her priceless but most miscellaneous belongings until they became veritable museums, extended the grounds to the bounds of the village of Reuil, stocked them with exotic flowers and rare animals, and erected in them conservatories and hot-houses on the grandest scale. Both within and without, the most extraordinary medley was everywhere to be seen. This was natural enough in the case of her furniture and collection of works of art, since all Europe as well as Egypt had been called upon to contribute objects, old and new. In the grounds Josephine, by her constant changes of mind, produced the same effect. Each new idea necessitated an abandonment of the old, till in the end Malmaison became a garden of surprises with its temples and obelisks, grottoed saints and classical gods, lakes and streams, for which the main difficulty was to find the water.

Two of the great extravagances of the mistress of Malmaison were her crazes for strange animals and flowers ; and these continued to the end of her days. Among the birds and beasts were parrots, black swans, an eagle, a king vulture, an ostrich, chamois, gazelles, flying squirrels, kangaroos, a seal, an orang-utan, quantities of monkeys, a flock of merino sheep, some dwarf ponies, and a herd of Swiss cattle, to tend which she imported a Swiss shepherd and shepherdess, building them a Swiss chalet in the grounds. On idle afternoons there were all these animals to be fed, a task which never wearied her.

Her flower garden was famous all over Europe, and has left traces of its fame in the names of several well-known plants. From her earliest days in France she had looked back with longing memories to the brilliant blooms of the West Indies. Paintings of flowers had always decorated her rooms, and the widow Beauharnais's bills for cut flowers had been high. As soon as the opportunity presented itself to gratify her taste for the more exotic specimens, she seized it without any more thought of the cost than when she dealt with her jewellers or milliners. To

help her in her schemes she appointed, at a salary of six thousand francs a year, a certain Mirbel, whose previous history included desertion from the army as well as interest in botany. At once expenses began to mount at an enormous rate. One hothouse was built by his advice at the cost of ninety-eight thousand francs. The ever-increasing figures attracted Napoleon's attention, and in 1805 Josephine was forced to dispense with Mirbel. In spite of his early record, however, he raised the name of French horticulture and was generous in distributing acclimatised species to amateurs who asked for them. With his departure Josephine, although she did not cease to care for her flowers, devoted more attention and money to the park rather than the garden of Malmaison. But she had already established a reputation as a lover of flowers which is likely to linger while her name is remembered.¹

¹ As early as 1801 our own Prince Regent forwarded to her from London some plants which had been captured by English warships when on their way to her—a tribute to her fame as a flower-grower. The dedication with which Ventenat, Member of the Institute, prefaced his book on the Malmaison Garden, may be considered of interest: "Madame, you have not considered that the taste for flowers should be a barren study. You have brought together under your eyes the rarest plants

Malmaison, then, was Josephine's own kingdom, the only one among her many residences where she could live the life which she preferred to all others—the life of expensive simplicity, untrammelled by etiquette. At Malmaison, even when Napoleon was there with her, her programme was of her own making. There was her toilet, with the three or four changes of dress a day ; her walks in the garden or park, with her favourite flowers and animals to watch and tend ; her charities in the neighbourhood, which were on as extravagant a scale as everything else ; her harp and her embroidery-frame, which she rarely touched ; and little more, unless there were visitors, except her meals and her sleep, in that curious bedroom which has been reconstituted now so that it presents to modern visitors the same appearance as it had in the lifetime of its occupant.

“ Is not this house,” pertinently asks M. Masson, “ where, after her divorce, she was to

on French soil. By your care there have even been naturalised several which had not yet left the deserts of Arabia and the burning sands of Egypt, and these now, duly classified, present to our gaze, in the beautiful garden of Malmaison, the sweetest memorial of your illustrious husband's conquests and the most pleasing proof of your studious leisure.”

come to live, run into debt, and die, is it not Josephine herself, her whole life described, her caprices recorded in stones, trees, pictures, statues, and flowers? Never could one, by the aid of external things, penetrate farther into any one's heart than one can here. It is like an instantaneous photograph of Josephine as she actually was. This was her own property, which cost more than ten million francs and, with all the curious bric-à-brac which it contained, remained incomplete, contradictory, impossible, a memorial of the caprices of a woman who was kept on the grandest scale ever known. There, in the midst of immense luxury and her enormous accumulation of treasures, she led a bourgeois life, among her flowers, her pet animals waiting to be fed, the guests who gave her occasion to change her costume, her small dinners and her concerts after dinner, her backgammon and her patience."

CHAPTER XIX

A ROUND OF VISITS

SIGNS of the new order of things since the Republic had been merged in the Empire multiplied rapidly. The anniversary of the 25 *messidor* (July 14) was the great day of the year, on which the official eulogium of the Revolution was wont to be pronounced. In 1804 the commemoration was postponed until the next day, which was a Sunday, and instead of the usual ceremony there was a new scene witnessed in the church of the Invalides, which had been the Temple of Mars during the Revolution and had but lately resumed its ecclesiastical character. The Emperor decided that there should be a solemn distribution of the Stars of the Legion of Honour on this day. All along the road from the Tuileries to the Invalides were drawn up two lines of troops on either side. Josephine drove to the church in a procession of four carriages, in which rode,

beside herself, the Bonaparte princesses and the officers and ladies of her household. The gallery of the church was assigned to them and to the members of the Diplomatic Body. In the midst sat Josephine, dressed in a pink tulle robe, cut very low and sown with silver stars, while in her hair were a multitude of diamond clusters. "In this fresh and resplendent toilette," writes Mme. de Rémusat, "her elegant deportment, her charming smile, and the sweetness of her glance produced such an effect that I heard a number of people who were present at the ceremony declare that she eclipsed all the assembly which surrounded her."

The Emperor arrived at the Invalides after his wife and was received at the door by Monseigneur du Belloy, Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris, bearing holy water. A throne was erected for Napoleon on the left hand of the altar, to which he was conducted by the Archbishop. Behind him sat all the leading civil and military dignitaries. In the nave were the members of the Legion of Honour, and behind the altar seven hundred old soldiers and the pupils of the *École Polytechnique*. Mass began, and after the Gospel the oath of fidelity to the Empire, the

Emperor, and the laws of the Republic was administered. Napoleon then personally distributed the decorations of his order, beginning with Cardinal Caprara, to whom he gave his own cordon. A *Te Deum* followed, and the Emperor and Empress drove back to the Tuileries in state.

Napoleon had already in mind a scheme for a far greater ceremony, in which Joséphine was destined to play a much larger part than she had played at any of the previous public shows in which she had been associated with her husband. When he first conceived the idea of his own Consecration, and when he decided that Joséphine also should share in this great religious blessing, we do not know. But it must have been early in 1804 that his thoughts turned definitely in this direction. It was a bold step for a son of the Revolution to call in the Pope to give his sanction to the ruler who sat in the place of the Legitimist Bourbons. Pope Stephen III. had consecrated Pepin, when asking for his military aid against the Lombards; Stephen IV. had consecrated Louis le Débonnaire; and Leo III. had crowned Charlemagne at Rome itself. But was it consistent with

Napoleon's " Republicanism " to ask Pius VII. to come to France as the two Stephens had done and to renew an old tradition in favour of a new dynasty which had no claim on his benevolence beyond what the conclusion of the Concordat had given it? To persuade his followers that it was so was the task which he now set himself, and as usual when he put himself to bring them over to his views, relying on his personal hold upon them, he succeeded. But when he started for the camp at Boulogne, three days after the service at the Invalides, his mind must have been full of the difficulties which he was making for himself as well as of his plans against England.

While maturing his scheme for the joint Coronation and Consecration and making the first indirect advances to the Vatican through his chosen agents, Napoleon decided that Josephine should spend part of August and September at Aix-la-Chapelle. There were the waters for her to take, and beside, he contemplated joining her there later for a different purpose of his own. He determined that his wife should travel in state befitting her new rank. The party to accompany her numbered in all

about fifty persons, and the scale upon which the journey was conducted may be gathered from the fact that the expenses by the way amounted to twelve thousand francs. Napoleon himself drew up the route by which Aix was to be reached ; and not only this, but also gave instructions as to every detail of the trip. He even dictated beforehand, it was said, the answers which Josephine was to make to the addresses of welcome which would be presented to her, and she spent her time in the carriage learning by heart the words which she was to utter to complimentary prefects and mayors. She was an Empress now, and weight would be attached to her language. Therefore Napoleon preferred that this language should have his sanction before it proceeded from her lips.

The line of advance toward Aix prescribed by Napoleon lay through Soissons, Reims, Sedan, and Liége. No one dared to suggest a departure from the programme, although an incident which occurred before they reached Liége must have tempted the travellers to disobey. The Emperor had directed them to drive by a road which was marked upon the map but was not yet completed in reality. The

way was therefore very rough, and in going uphill the carriages had to be roped together. Josephine, a poor traveller at the best of times, was in a state of terror, crying out that she must get out of the carriage. The absent Emperor's orders, however, prevailed and, despite fears and lamentations, the journey continued. Nightfall found the party at a small village, where nothing could be obtained except mattresses on the floor, and not even enough of them for all. It was indeed with feelings of relief that all finally saw the houses of Aix and prepared to rest from their fatigues. A great demonstration awaited the Empress, who entered the town between lines of saluting troops and under triumphal arches. Unhappily the accommodation provided did not equal the welcome. The so-called Palace was a ruinous building, and far too small to meet the calls upon its space. It became at last necessary to depart from instructions, and on the day after her arrival Josephine moved into the Prefecture, which had been put at her disposal by its occupants.

Before the arrival of the Emperor the days at Aix were very quiet. Josephine found the society of the place insufficient to make her for-

get that she had come partly to take the waters. Indeed Corvisart had accompanied her for the express purpose of superintending her "cure," which shows that not yet had all hope been abandoned of her bearing a child to Napoleon. There is a letter from the Emperor, dated Ostend, August 14, in which he writes : "*Mon amie*, I have not received news from you for several days. I should, however, have been very glad to learn of the good effect of the waters and in what manner you pass your time."

The second part of Napoleon's question might easily have been answered by Joséphine if she had said that she made the best of the only possible amusements which were to be had. There were visits to be paid in the daytime to the local sights and manufactures, a hunt or two, walks and picnics ; in the evening, an indifferent German opera, relieved by a visiting theatrical company from Paris, a ball given by Joséphine herself, and some parties for whist or other card-games. A peaceful provincial existence, indeed, for Joséphine ! Perhaps the most notable event was a visit to the cathedral to see the relics which tradition made a gift to

Charlemagne from the Empress Irene. These were kept in an iron chest, hidden by a wall which was pulled down once in every seven years and then built up again. Among them was a small box of silver-gilt, the ability to open which showed that the opener would be fortunate to the end of his or her days. It was perhaps hardly strange, seeing that Josephine's visit was expected, that when the box was put into her hands she had no difficulty in opening it.

The arrival of Napoleon on September 3 made a complete change at Aix. He had gone from Ostend back to Boulogne, where he had been contemplating a descent upon England which he was reluctantly compelled to abandon. To the dismay of the Empress and her ladies, he informed them that they must be ready to accompany him to Mayence to meet the Prince of Baden and his family. First, however, there would be a further stay of ten days at Aix. The envoy of the Emperor Francis was there, on behalf of his master, to greet Napoleon, and to present the letters accrediting him to the French Court. This was Count Cobentzel, well known previously at the Court of Catherine the Great. Other nations had also hastened to send

their representatives, and up to September 12 there was a constant round of receptions, dinners, excursions, and other festivities. In particular, Napoleon was anxious to be seen paying honour to the relics of Charlemagne, whose name it was useful to recall at a time when he himself was asking for one of the privileges of Charlemagne. Josephine accompanied him to the tomb of the hero, was shown a "fragment of the true Cross" which he had been wont to carry about with him, and had the good taste to refuse an arm which she was offered from among his remains.

An interesting letter written by Josephine from Aix to her daughter, whose second child was to be born in the following November, is preserved in the collection edited by the latter. "The Emperor," Josephine writes, "has read your letter. He seemed to me vexed at not hearing from you sometimes. He would not make accusations against your heart, if he knew it as I do; but appearances are against you. Since he may think that you are neglecting him, do not lose an instant in repairing the imaginary wrong. Tell him that discretion has made you not write to him, that your affection

has suffered under the rule which respect imposed upon you ; that, as he has always shown you a father's kindness and tenderness, it would be sweet to you to offer him the homage of your gratitude. Speak to him also of the hope which you cherish of seeing me again at the time of your confinement. I cannot think of being far from you at that time. Be sure, my dear Hortense, that nothing shall prevent my coming to look after you. So speak about it to Bonaparte, who loves you as his own child, which adds much to my feelings toward him."

Both her extreme anxiety to please Napoleon and her affection for her daughter are well shown in this letter, one of the most effective documents in her defence against the charges of lack of wifely and motherly instincts.

The period allowed for the stay at Aix having come to an end, Josephine accompanied the Emperor to Cologne. The journey brought on an indisposition—the usual *migraine*—but she was not allowed therefore to escape the duty of meeting the Elector of Bavaria and joining in the festivities, which lasted for four days. On September 16 she left for Coblentz, where Napoleon réjoined her next day to be present at

a ball given in their honour. From Coblenz they proceeded to Mayence, Napoleon by land and Josephine along the Rhine on a yacht put at her disposal by the Prince of Nassau-Weilburg. At Mayence another round awaited them of what passes at courts for gaiety, and the severe etiquette and long hours made Josephine and the ladies who accompanied her pray for escape to Paris. The town was full of German princes, notably those of Baden, Bavaria, and Hesse; and the formation of the Confederation of the Rhine, under Napoleon's suzerainty, was plainly foreshadowed. But it may be doubted whether the political importance of this exacting tour was appreciated by Josephine and her ladies, ill-lodged for the most part, tired by their journeys, and oppressed by a ceremonial to which they were as yet unaccustomed. It was not until October 2 that they were released. On that day, leaving Napoleon to make his way back more slowly by a different route, Josephine started for Paris by way of Spire, Nancy, and Châlons. She had been absent for two months, during one month of which she had an excellent opportunity of forming an opinion of the more arduous part of the life of a

sovereign. She learnt her lesson well, and among the characteristics which helped to persuade Napoleon that no wife could suit him better than Josephine was the uncomplaining way in which she always endured the fatigues of her station.

CHAPTER XX

THE CORONATION AT NOTRE-DAME

ON his return from the Rhine Napoleon determined to make known to his inner Cabinet that he not only wished to have himself consecrated and crowned by the Pope, but also Josephine with him. His three confidants were Joseph Bonaparte, Cambacères, and Lebrun. His brother made the strongest objections to the scheme, and it was with difficulty that Napoleon restrained himself in face of Joseph's attitude. To make matters worse, after leaving the council Joseph proceeded to discuss indignantly with his personal friends the whole project, and particularly the idea that the Imperial princesses should carry the Empress's train at the Coronation. One of these friends repeated what he had heard to Fouché, remarking that naturally Mme. Joseph, being a virtuous woman, would find such a duty painful. Fouché told his friend Josephine, through



POPE PIUS VII.

From a painting by David at the Louvre.

whom the remark reached Napoleon. The Emperor was more hurt than his wife. But, after all, Joseph had no power to do more than protest. If the Pope could be persuaded to come to Paris, the Emperor would be in a position to dictate ; or so at least it must have seemed to the latter.

The story of the relations between Josephine and Pius VII. is a most curious and entertaining one. They begin in January 1803, when Pius sent a sub-legate to convey their hats to the new French cardinals. His Holiness was obviously ignorant of the early history of the First Consul's wife. He gave to the sub-legate a special brief commending him to his "beloved daughter in Christ, Victoria Bonaparte" (*dilectæ in Christo filiæ Victoriæ Bonaparte*); the mistake in the name can hardly have been intentional. A year later, on January 13, 1804, Josephine wrote to Pius, sending him a rochet which she had had made for him, and for which, by the way, Napoleon paid. Her messenger was her cousin Louis Tascher, who was conveying a letter from Napoleon himself to the Pope. Tascher brought back a letter of thanks from Pius, who wrote to Josephine again in

June—still calling her *carissimæ in Christo filiæ nostræ Victoriæ, Gallorum Imperatrici*—begging her to use her influence on her husband for the increase among the French, and the protection and preservation, of the Catholic religion; and he bestowed upon her his apostolic benediction.

This friendliness of the Pope toward his wife accorded well with Napoleon's scheme. In May 1804 he had begun to sound Pius, through the well-disposed Legate Caprara, on the subject of a journey to Paris to crown him Emperor of the French. On the day that Caprara wrote to the Vatican, there was an evening reception in Josephine's *salon* at Saint-Cloud. Here Napoleon discoursed with Caprara enthusiastically on the advantage to religion which his glorious idea promised. Caprara was prepared to do his utmost to promote relations between Rome and Paris. But at the Vatican the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, had no such reasons for wishing to be on good terms with Napoleon, and proved a considerable obstacle in the way of a settlement, even delaying to send to Caprara letters accrediting him to the new French Government until June.

The prolonged negotiations concerning the Pope's visit to Paris are given very fully in M. Masson's volume on "Le Sacre et le Couronnement de Napoléon," which should be read by all who are interested in the history of an extraordinary intrigue. The advisers of Pius imposed conditions with which Napoleon's recent oath "to respect and enforce respect for the laws of the Concordat *and the liberty of religious cults*" made it difficult, or rather impossible, to comply ; and they wished the ceremony to take place on Christmas Day, which was much later than Napoleon intended. The Sacred College, moreover, although they did not put the demand into writing, cherished hopes of a restoration of the Legations to Rome. Further difficulties soon arose. Consalvi wished to dictate the terms of the formal letter of invitation from Napoleon to His Holiness. Then Cardinal Fesch at Rome, as the Emperor's uncle, did not want the negotiations to proceed without his own intervention ; an intervention which hardly tended at first to hasten the progress of affairs. He wrote, however, in so unjustifiably sanguine a strain to Paris that as early as the middle of June Josephine welcomed Caprara at one of her

receptions with the words : “ So we are to have the Holy Father in Paris to consecrate the Emperor, my husband ! ” The Cardinal Legate knew better than she how matters actually stood, and can little have expected at this time that before six months had passed her words would be proved true.

The publication of the scheme in France aroused immediately a strong opposition outside Roman Catholic circles. It was with difficulty that Napoleon could make an adequate defence against the attacks coming from various quarters. The double task of proving to the Pope that religion would benefit greatly by his journey to Paris and of proving to France that the Roman Church would not benefit at all by that journey, would have proved too much for most men. His apology to France for the Consecration ceremony cannot have sounded very convincing. The *sacre*, he said, was “ an invocation of the heavenly power on behalf of a new dynasty, an invocation made according to the ordinary forms of the oldest, most general, and most popular cult of France.” To succeed at Rome it needed all the aid of Talleyrand (ex-Bishop of Autun !), of Fesch, and still more of falsehood.

But success came at last. On September 4 Fesch wrote to Talleyrand that the Pope had agreed to come. He had taken on himself to make certain promises (which undoubtedly he wished, as a churchman, to see Napoleon carry out) with regard to the concessions to be made to the Papacy, the ceremonial to be observed at Paris, and the terms of the formal letter of invitation. Napoleon, on receiving at Cologne news that the Pope was prepared to consent, did not trouble to ask what promises his uncle had made, but wrote on September 15 a letter to Pius in which he not only passed over the subject of concessions, but did not even pay regard to the ordinary usage of Christian princes in writing to His Holiness. Moreover, he despatched the letter to Rome by the hands of an aide-de-camp, whereas it had been stipulated that it should be conveyed by two French bishops. So much was Pius chagrined by the breach of faith that he seriously contemplated withdrawing his promise to go to Paris. It required an adroit mixture of prayers and menaces from Fesch to persuade him that it was now too late to withdraw. Pius yielded, and on November 2 commenced his journey from Rome.

It had been designed by Napoleon to have the combined Coronation and Consecration on the 18 *brumaire*, the fifth anniversary of the *coup d'État* which had made him master of France. And, although when he left Paris for Boulogne in the middle of July, all was in a state of uncertainty, he had given orders for preparations to be commenced at Notre-Dame and in the Pavilion of Flora at the Tuileries respectively for the Coronation service and the lodging of the Pope. When it became certain that, if the Pope came at all, he could not arrive on the 18 *brumaire*, it was given out that the date would be the 5 *frimaire* (November 26). Delay was both annoying and expensive as soon as arrangements had become definite, and civil, military, and naval representatives had begun to crowd into Paris from the provinces. Every day increased the cost to the nation. Each National Guard alone, for instance, who came to Paris received five francs a day, half of which came from the Treasury, half from the departmental funds. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the unfortunate Pius was harassed on his journey by constant reminders that haste was imperative. Finally he was informed that a post-

ponement had been made to the 11 *frimaire* (December 2), but that the Coronation would take place positively on that date, whether he were in Paris or not.

A hurried and uncomfortable journey brought the Pope on the 4 *frimaire* to Fontainebleau, where a strange comedy took place. Napoleon was unable to find a suitable French precedent for the reception of the Holy Father by a sovereign of France. The meeting must be accidental, he decided. The Emperor Joseph II. of Austria had met Pope Pius VI. unexpectedly when out hunting. Napoleon set out for Fontainebleau with Josephine and arranged a hunting party in the forest for the 4 *frimaire*—which was Sunday, November 25. At midday he was at the cross of Saint-Hérem, in full hunting costume, when the Pope's cavalcade was observed approaching. The carriage stopped and, while Napoleon dismounted from his horse, Pius stepped out in his white robes and white silk shoes on the muddy ground. The Emperor of thirty-five years and the Pope of sixty-two fell into each other's arms. An Imperial carriage drove up. Napoleon hastened to take the right-hand seat, and with the Pope on his left drove

to the château of Fontainebleau. What need was there to discuss etiquette, when the Emperor was making it for himself and the rest of the world ?

A little rest was allowed to the weary Pius at Fontainebleau. On the Sunday afternoon he paid short visits to the apartments of the Emperor and Empress ; but it was not until next day that the real business began. A dinner was to take place at the château at which, beside the Pope, Emperor and Empress, there were to be present Cardinal Fesch, Joseph Bonaparte, and Eugène Beauharnais. But in the course of the day a terrible revelation was made ; nothing less, indeed, than the fact that, in the eyes of the Church, Napoleon and Josephine had never been married at all. The blow was tremendous to His Holiness. To quote the words of M. Masson : ¹

“ That there had been presented to him, as though she were a legitimate wife, Napoleon’s concubine, living with him outside the Church’s laws, in a state of mortal sin ; that he had been made to address to this woman eulogistic briefs, in which he had acknowledged her as Empress

¹ “ Le Sacre et le Couronnement de Napoléon,” 153.

of the French and his dear daughter in Christ, and in which he commended the Catholic Church to her protection—this was enough. But that it was upon this woman that he was to bestow the greatest of the sacraments, the triple unction given with the chrism reserved for bishops, made of oil and balm, *quia per oleum infusio gratiæ, per balsamum odor bonæ famæ designatur*—this passed beyond all bounds.”

It is not surprising to hear that, when the disclosure had been made, Pius declined to attend the concert in the Empress’s room after dinner, or that he had Napoleon notified that he would take no part in the Coronation service until he had received proofs that the Imperial couple had received the sacrament of marriage. Napoleon was placed in a difficult position. He could not now dispense with the Pope’s assistance and have a purely civil Coronation ceremony, for that would prove to his Roman Catholic subjects that he had attempted to trick His Holiness and also advertise the fact that he had never been married to Josephine, according to their ideas. Nor could he publicly explain why he had not yet taken the step in his own case and Josephine’s which he had considered necessary

in the cases of his sisters and of Louis. There was no third alternative to yielding to the demand of Pius or throwing him over and entirely undoing that work of conciliating the Church to which he had devoted no little labour since he had established himself as the ruler of France. He could not hesitate. He agreed to an ecclesiastical marriage, only reserving the right of having it performed in secret.

Accordingly, when he drove into Paris with Pius on November 28, he was under promise to make Josephine his wife in the eyes of the Church as she was already in those of the law. Josephine had returned to Paris a few hours before him. Imbert de Saint-Amand pictures her a devout daughter of the Church, rejoicing in the thought that she was at last to become Napoleon's wife in very deed. No doubt Josephine rejoiced at the idea of the religious ceremony, but hardly on the grounds alleged by Saint-Amand, for devotion to the Church cannot be considered a prominent trait in her character. The thought which was likely to bring her joy was that the religious marriage would be an additional protection to her against divorce. She was reaping the reward of a wise

discretion. We never hear at any period of a plea from her to Napoleon that he should marry her according to the rites of the Church. But, when all was in train for the Consecration and Coronation which Napoleon wished her to share with him at the hands of the Pope, she allowed Pius to know that she was, according to his views, living in mere concubinage with the Emperor. Nothing more was necessary. She had not designed the dramatic situation. She merely took advantage of it; and, without the necessity of an appeal to Napoleon (as far as we know), she gained all that she wanted.

The promised marriage took place in the Tuileries chapel on the night of November 30. Fesch performed the ceremony, and the only witnesses were Talleyrand and Marshal Berthier. A profound secrecy was observed; but the requirements of Pope Pius were satisfied.

There still remained in dispute the question as to the ceremonial to be adopted for the Consecration. Neither the ancient French form nor the Roman Pontifical pleased Napoleon. A new model, consisting of a mixture of the two, with additions considered suitable to the unique occasion, was drawn up by the Minister of Public

Worship, Portalis, with the assistance of Cambacères, now Grand Chancellor, de Pradt, and Josephine's friend Ségur. This was presented to the Pope, and, although it was designed to minimise as far as possible the subjection of State to Church, it was substantially accepted. Pius even agreed to Napoleon's placing of the crown upon his own head. As M. Masson satisfactorily shows, the legend of Napoleon departing from the agreed form and seizing his crown from the Pope to put it on his head with his own hands, although it dates from the time of Thiers and has been widely accepted, is upset by the text of the Pope's prayers in the printed order of service.

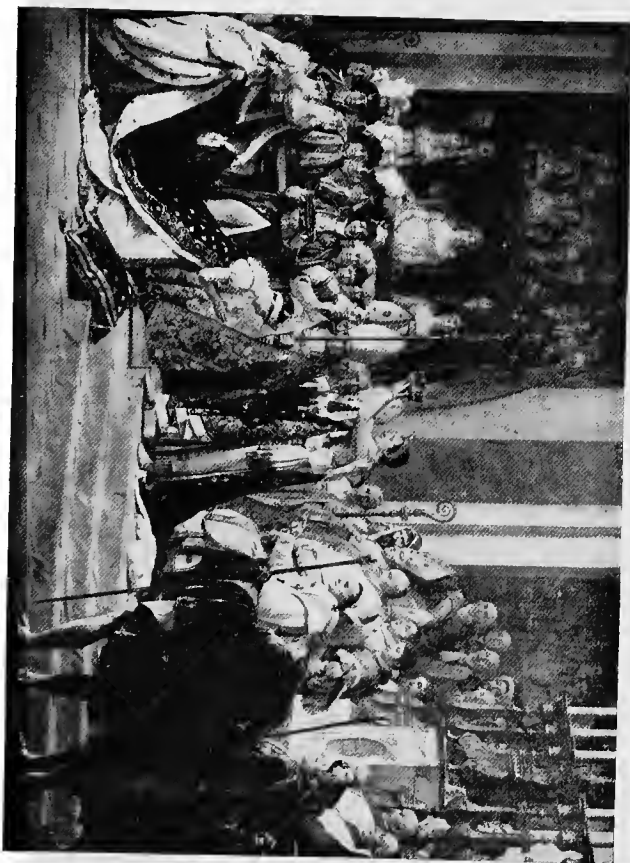
Pius showed himself very accommodating, especially when we consider that he had obtained no confirmation of Cardinal Fesch's verbal promises on behalf of his nephew; but on one point at the very last moment he remained firm and gained the day. The Emperor desired that the *Te Deum* should not be sung until the end of the whole service, which he intended to include the administration of the constitutional oath. Pius, however, on his part, had no intention of being present at the oath, since

thereby the Emperor swore to respect the liberty of cults in France. Recognising again the necessity of a concession, Napoleon consented that the *Te Deum* should follow the enthronement and that the constitutional oath should not be administered until Mass was finished and the Pope had withdrawn to a side chapel. The Pope in his turn made a last concession, absolving Napoleon from the duty of communicating on the morning of the Coronation; and nothing further remained in dispute.

On the morning of December 2, the appointed day, the Duchesse d'Abrantès records that she was one of those who breakfasted with the Empress. Josephine was agitated but happy. She spoke of all the amiable things which Napoleon had said to her already that morning and how he had tried her crown upon her. Tears were falling as she told this. Then she related how she had begged that Lucien might be allowed to return to Paris, but in vain. "Bonaparte answered me sharply, and I was obliged to desist. I wished to prove to Lucien that I can return good for evil. If you have the chance, let him know," she asked Mme. Junot. The story is curious but not improbable.

Josephine, as Napoleon had once told Lucien, had no more gall than a pigeon. Truly Lucien offered her a fine opportunity of returning good for evil ; no one had ever done her greater wrong except Alexandre de Beauharnais.

The two Napoleons were masters in the art of organising public shows, but it may be doubted whether any of the great occasions under either Empire, even including the marriage of Napoleon III. and the Empress Eugénie nearly fifty years later, were distinguished by such magnificence as was seen at Notre-Dame and in Paris generally on December 2, 1804. The celebrations began at six o'clock on the preceding evening, all the heights in the city being illuminated with Bengal lights, while artillery salutes were fired regularly up to midnight. The preparations for the procession began before daylight, and the doors of Notre-Dame were open as early as six for the admission of those who were to be present at the service. The streets from the Tuileries to the Cathedral were lined on either side by a triple row of troops in the new uniforms which had been given out to them on the 18 *brumaire*. At nine o'clock Pope Pius left his rooms in the Pavilion of Flora and



THE CORONATION OF NAPOLEON.

From the painting in the Louvre. Photo by Levy et ses Fils.

drove to Notre-Dame in a coach drawn by eight dapple-grey horses, escorted by a squadron of dragoons. The coach itself had been Josephine's and had been specially prepared for the Pope on this occasion. At half-past ten His Holiness appeared in the Cathedral and made his way to his throne. The morning was intensely cold, but the long-suffering Pius mounted to his seat and sat waiting for more than an hour. In his singularly pale face, almost as white as his robes, his eyes were closed and only his mouth could be seen moving in prayer. During the long wait few signs were to be seen of the subjection of State to Church which some of the Emperor's subjects so dreaded.

Napoleon and Josephine left the Tuileries about half-past ten, half an hour later than the appointed time. Josephine is perhaps not to be blamed for the delay, for one of her good points in Napoleon's eyes was that she never kept him waiting, however elaborate her toilet. The departure from the Palace was announced by the firing of guns, and all along the route the crowd was in a great state of excitement. The size of the procession and the narrowness of the

streets, with the troops in front and the dense masses of sightseers behind, made progress very slow. But this gave more opportunity to witness the details of the show as it passed. The procession was composed of twenty-five carriages in all, drawn by one hundred and fifty-two horses, of six regiments of cavalry, and a vast staff of mounted officers. At the head rode Murat, Governor of Paris. The carriages of the masters of the ceremonies, of the great officials, and of the Imperial princesses preceded the Emperor, those of the officers and ladies of the various households followed. In the centre of all came the Imperial coach, drawn by eight dun-coloured horses with white plumes upon their heads. The coach had so much glass in its construction that almost the whole of the interior could be seen. The framework was heavily gilt and decorated with medallions, palms, and branches of laurel and olives, while on the top was a large model of Charlemagne's crown upborne on an altar supported by four golden eagles. The inside was lined with white velvet, embroidered with gold, and the ceiling and sides were adorned with a winged thunderbolt, a crowned N, olive and laurel wreaths,

stars and swarm of bees, the symbol which Napoleon had borrowed from the Merovingian Childeric. The Emperor sat on the right hand, with Josephine at his left and Joseph and Louis facing them. Napoleon was in a Spanish costume of purple velvet, embroidered in gold, with a mantle to match, and covered with jewels. His brothers were in white velvet costumes, cut like his own. Josephine wore a long-sleeved waistless robe of white satin, sown with gold bees and embroidered with both gold and silver, while a profusion of diamonds covered her corsage and the upper parts of the sleeves. A white velvet mantle, with gold embroidery, hung from her shoulders, and gold-embroidered white velvet shoes were on her feet. From the bills, which were preserved, it appears that her robe alone cost ten thousand francs, her mantle seven thousand, and her shoes six hundred and fifty. But all this was eclipsed by her diadem of four rows of pearls united by foliage of diamonds, which cost more than a million.

It was eleven o'clock when the coach reached the Cathedral. Napoleon and Josephine had now to clothe themselves afresh. Napoleon put on a white satin tunic and knee-breeches, with

a huge purple velvet mantle, embroidered in gold and lined with ermine ; while on his head he wore a laurel wreath in gold. Josephine had another white satin robe, ornamented with gold fringes, which figure in the bill at ten thousand francs the robe and over one thousand the fringes. Her new mantle was no less than twenty ells in length, purple in colour like her husband's and sown by golden bees. Its embroidery had cost sixteen hundred francs, and its Russian ermine lining ten thousand. In order that her diamond-decked breast might not be covered, the mantle was fastened to the left shoulder only and by a clasp at the waist, making its weight very awkward to bear. Five princesses, all in white satin embroidered with gold and with white plumes and diamonds in their hair, were deputed to assist her in the task. These were the three sisters of the Emperor, Joseph's wife Julie, and her own daughter Hortense. To induce his sisters to perform this act of service to Josephine had cost Napoleon many displays of anger, and it was only after threats of exile from France that they had consented to hold—they would not " carry "—the train. In compensation, each princess



JOSEPHINE.

From a sketch by David for his picture of the Coronation.

was allowed to have an officer of her own household to follow her and uphold her mantle. The resentment of Josephine's sisters-in-law was not appeased, however, according to the rumours of the day.

The Emperor and Empress advanced from the vestry at a quarter to twelve, amid a gorgeous mass of colour, in which the prominent hues were the violet and gold of the heralds, green and black of the ushers, green and gold of the pages, violet and silver of the masters of ceremonies, blue and gold of the marshals, and the scarlets, greens, and blues of the officers of the Imperial Household. The Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, assisted by another cardinal, came forward to meet them with holy water and an address of welcome, and as soon as they had been conducted to their thrones the Pope arose from his and came down to intone the "*Veni Creator.*"

The whole ceremony at Notre-Dame occupied nearly three hours, including the administration of the constitutional oath, during which the Pope and his suite withdrew. Not only cold assailed the spectators on this bitter December day, but also hunger, although hawkers of light

refreshment were allowed to enter the Cathedral. But for the music (of which there was so much that the band-parts comprised more than seventeen thousand pages) the greater part of the congregation could enjoy but little of the service. We quote the words of M. Masson ¹ :

“ In accordance with Napoleon’s wishes, the details of the first part of the ceremony were only seen ‘ by priests or by men who through the superiority of their intellect had the faith of the eighth century.’ So the oath, the anointings, the blessing, and the delivery of the insignia passed unnoticed. It was with difficulty that the Emperor was seen when, ascending to the altar and turning toward the congregation, he crowned himself ; he disappeared as he came down the steps and proceeded to crown the Empress. The advance toward the Grand Throne for the enthronement produced a sensation. The Empress mounted the first five steps and then the weight of the mantle, no longer upheld by the princesses, who remained at the foot of the steps, caused her to stumble

¹ “ Le Sacre et le Couronnement de Napoléon,” 209-10. Those interested in the order of the service should consult M. Masson’s book ; and also Imbert de Saint-Amand, “ La Cour de l’Impératrice Joséphine,” 66 ff.

and almost carried her backwards. She was obliged to summon all her nerve-force to straighten herself and continue the ascent. Had her train-bearers planned this revenge? It was believed so. What exculpates them is that a similar mishap befell the Emperor. He too stumbled and was seen to make a slight movement backward; but with a vigorous effort he recovered himself and quickly mounted the steps."

The enthronement over, the Pope kissed the Emperor's cheek and pronounced the "*Vivat Imperator in æternum.*" The two orchestras struck into the music of the Abbé Rose. At the end of the Mass the Pope retired with his cardinals and clergy, while Napoleon took the constitutional oath. A herald then proclaimed "The most glorious and august Emperor Napoleon, Emperor of the French, consecrated and enthroned." The Cathedral clergy gathered about the throne to lead out the Emperor and Empress. The magnificent ceremony was at an end, and without a mishap. It was true that there had been the stumbles on the steps, Napoleon had yawned once, the Archbishop's opening address had been cut short by a sign

from Duroc (plainly inspired by his master), and as the party left the Cathedral Napoleon had been seen to thrust his sceptre into Cardinal Fesch's back to attract his attention. But otherwise nothing had marred the dignity of the occasion.

Josephine, in particular, had acted admirably and appeared perfect. She had looked more like twenty-five than forty-one, says Mme. de Rémusat. The Emperor was well pleased with the day and with her. Dining alone with her at the Tuileries that night, after they had driven back with her over the long route chosen for the return to the Palace, cheered the whole way by enthusiastic crowds, he had insisted that she should keep on her head the crown "which became her so well." Had she not every reason for satisfaction also? No one now could cast any doubt upon her position as legitimate wife and Empress, and there could hardly have been in her mind on this day any lingering fear of a divorce. The combined Coronation and Consecration was certainly an extraordinary honour for Josephine, one which no Queen of France since Marie de Medici had received; and not even she at the same time

as her husband. Marie de Medici, moreover, had been a possible future Regent, whereas on Napoleon's death the regency would not fall to Josephine. "To consecrate and crown Josephine," says M. Masson, "was an act of sentiment and had nothing to do with politics or with reason." This act of sentiment was the supreme witness of Napoleon's love for his wife. It was manifested in little more than a year after the period when he was supposed to be growing tired of her, and might well have been taken to prove the falsity of such suggestions.

It was true that Napoleon did not take much trouble to conceal any longer that he had occasional attractions toward other women. At this very period of the Coronation he cast his eyes upon a Mme. Duchâtel, the pretty young wife of an old Councillor of State, who had recently joined the Empress's Household. Josephine suspected infidelity at the time when the Pope was being received at Fontainebleau, but thought that it was by Marshal Ney's wife that Napoleon's fancy was caught. She discovered the truth, according to Mme. de Rémusat, by actually surprising the guilty lady with her husband at Saint-Cloud. There was a violent

scene, where Napoleon, almost on the eve of the Coronation, if we may believe the memoirists, angrily revived the talk of divorce. But tears, and a reconciliation, soon followed, and Josephine did not even dismiss Mme. Duchâtel from her Household. She had begun to recognise that it would be well to allow the Emperor some distraction—"the amusements," in fact, "in which his affection had no part."

CHAPTER XXI

THE ITALIAN CORONATION

THE Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine was followed by a series of day and night festivities in honour of Emperor and Empress, organised by the public bodies and various sections of the community—assuredly one of the most elaborate series of entertainments known in history. Money was spent by the million of francs. The cost of the ceremony of December 2 was only allowed by Napoleon to have been three millions. In reality it probably cost ten millions, while enemies of the Government reckoned the figure at fifty to sixty millions. And the expense continued long after the day of the Coronation. On December 3 was the popular fête all over Paris, when the city became like a fair with its dancing-halls, roundabouts, and shows. Food was distributed free of charge, so that in spite of the cold the mob was in good spirits. Heralds also went

about scattering commemorative medals, of which thirteen thousand were struck in gold and seventy-five thousand in silver. At night fireworks and illuminations kept sightseers out in the streets, heedless of the temperature.

The municipality of Paris was among the foremost to make a display of its loyalty ; and on such a scale that the debt incurred took several years to clear off. The entertainment began with the arrival at the Hôtel de Ville of the Emperor, Empress, and the Princes Joseph and Louis, in the same coach and in the same costume as in the procession of December 2. In the Throne Room Josephine found waiting for her a silver-gilt toilet set, afterwards valued at more than fourteen thousand francs, which the President of the Municipal Council begged her to accept in a most flattering speech. A banquet followed in the newly named Hall of Victories, where Napoleon and Josephine dined at a table by themselves raised on a platform above the rest of the guests. A symphony by Haydn accompanied the dinner, and at its conclusion there was a great firework display, one of the set-pieces representing Napoleon crossing the Saint-Bernard. At the end of all came a



NAPOLEON IN THE IMPERIAL ROBES.
From an engraving after the picture by F. Gérard.

ball, in which seven hundred people took part.

So the festivities went on, the Marshals of the Empire, the Senate, and the Legislative Body all striving to outdo the city of Paris, while at the Tuileries the Emperor and Empress played the part of hosts in the manner dear to Napoleon's heart. Among their guests was one who found the gaiety a little excessive ; namely, Pope Pius VII., who was observed discreetly to retire when the banquet at the Tuileries on December 4 gave place to a ballet in which Mme. Vestris and her companions played before the assembled company a " pastoral diversion."

However, His Holiness did not tire of Paris, it appeared. He made a stay of four months, giving audiences, visiting the churches, and seeing the sights. People began to talk of Napoleon having asked him to divide his year between Rome and Paris. But, as a matter of fact, the prolonged visit was not entirely in accordance with the wishes of Napoleon, who may have feared to see his guest becoming too popular. Pius had another reason for his stay. Fesch's rash promises remained unfulfilled, and Napoleon showed no signs of being willing to

fulfil them. Finally, seeing that there was no prospect of obtaining the restoration of the Legations to Rome nor of upsetting the liberty of cults in France, Pius left Paris on April 4, 1805. There was no breach with the Emperor, however, who did not take leave of the Pope until they were both in Turin, Pius on his way to the Vatican and Napoleon bound for Milan, where his Italian Coronation was to take place ; and as he passed through Parma in early May Pius sent a brief praying the Emperor to preserve his attachment for him and to present his greetings to his "august spouse." In the Milan ceremony he was to play no part.

Before leaving Paris Pope Pius performed an act very gratifying to Josephine in baptizing, in the Empress's apartments at Saint-Cloud, Napoleon-Louis, second son of Hortense and Louis Bonaparte. This was the child about whose birth Josephine manifested her anxiety at Aix. He was born in November 1804, and his baptism was delayed in order that it might be performed on March 27 by the Holy Father, in the presence of Emperor and Empress, the two parents, Mme. Letizia Bonaparte, lately arrived from Italy, and other members of the

Imperial family, as well as the most distinguished personages of the Court.

Pius left the Tuileries, as has been said, on April 4. Napoleon and Josephine, however, started for Italy from Fontainebleau several days before him. On the 2nd they were at Troyes and on the 10th at Lyon, which they entered after passing under a triumphal arch erected more than a mile outside the town. From Lyon Josephine wrote to her daughter that unanimous acclamations had greeted the Emperor everywhere. "He has won every heart ; and in the general picture of joy and affection toward his person it would be difficult for me to say which town has most distinguished itself." She added : " It is with great joy that I see the time approaching when I can embrace Eugène ; but my pleasure will not be complete, and while meeting one of my children I feel much sorrow in the separation from another who is equally dear to me."

Napoleon had not gone to Italy on a pleasure-trip. On the contrary, he had some very important business on hand. He had arranged to follow up his Coronation at Paris as Emperor of the French by another Coronation at Milan

as King of Italy. Josephine accompanied him, but not in order that she should share his second coronation. He did not intend to set her beside him on the throne of Italy, of which she must be Queen only by courtesy. It is true that at Milan she was assigned an Italian Household, drawn from the ladies of the best families of the city, and that she was universally spoken of as the Queen, or Empress and Queen. But she was not likely to mistake the meaning of these honours when the ceremony of May 26 took place, as will be seen.

Before proceeding to the Lombard capital, Napoleon made a short stay in the château of Stupinigi at Turin, whence he wrote to his mother his cruel letter concerning Elizabeth Patterson, Jerome's American wife, and sent orders to Jerome himself to meet him at Milan. From Turin he proceeded to Alessandria, and took the opportunity to give before Josephine, on the neighbouring battlefield of Marengo, an actual representation of the fight of five years ago. To complete the realism he had brought to him the original uniform and hat which he had worn at Marengo. On the following day, May 6, he received the wretched

Jerome into his presence and promised him pardon if he would renounce his wife ; which Jerome, in effect, did.

On May 8, amid the salutes of artillery, Napoleon entered Milan with Josephine at his side. He found waiting to welcome him the Archbishop of the city, who was none other than Cardinal Caprara, his ally in the negotiations with Pius VII. He could calculate, therefore, through Caprara's influence, on a warm reception in Milan above all other Italian towns and on the co-operation of the Lombard nobility in gathering together a suitable court. He hastened to make a good impression by repairing at once with Josephine to the Duomo and kneeling with her there before the altar. He did not work in vain, and during the whole time of his stay at Milan he and Josephine were overwhelmed with attentions and flattery from every class of society. If Josephine was but a courtesy Queen, she received at least as much homage as if her position were as official in Italy as in France. On May 25, the eve of the Coronation, there was a reception at the Monza Palace to the high Italian clergy, at which the Archbishop of Bergamo

complimented her in the following extravagant terms :

“ Madame, if Charity were to descend from heaven to redress the ills of humanity, she would seek no other lodging than the heart of a queen adored by her subjects. The feeling of love, gratitude, and respect which animates all your subjects is what brings to your feet all the bishops of the Kingdom of Italy. Happy as they are in finding in your august spouse the most sublime elements of glory and genius, and in you, madame, all that goodness has that is worthy of adoration, it only remains for them to offer up prayers for the prosperity of your reign and to bless Heaven for combining in the hearts of their sovereigns all that can command affection and respect for supreme power.”

The Coronation took place in the Cathedral on the following morning. Josephine accompanied her sister-in-law the Princess Elisa Bacciochi to seats reserved for them on a platform in the choir. She could now appreciate the difference between her positions at Notre-Dame and at the Duomo. There was no holy water for her on her entry, no throne for her near the altar, no princesses to hold her train.

With one page in attendance like Elisa, and having no precedence over her, she took her place in the choir, nothing more than a distinguished spectator of the proceedings.¹ She did but watch Napoleon receive from the hands of the Archbishop of Bologna the sword, mantle, and ring, and take from the altar himself the Iron Crown of Lombardy, putting it on his head and crying "*Dio me l'ha data, guai a chi la toccherà*" ("God has given it to me, let him who shall touch it beware!"). The words seem to have struck Napoleon pleasantly. In high good humour the same afternoon, after the return to the Monza Palace, he repeated them in French to Mme. Avrillon, Josephine's reader, rubbing his hands together as he did so.

The Coronation being over and the herald having proclaimed "Napoleon, Emperor of the French and King of Italy, is crowned and

¹ M. Masson says, in his "*Josephine Impératrice et Reine*," that Napoleon, reflecting on the *sacre* at Paris, regarded that ceremony as an accident without consequence. Previously Josephine had no fixed place at political ceremonies; nor did she have any such place afterwards. The *sacre* (he repeats) was, as it were, an accident and a surprise; and in future Josephine had no part in the great national solemnities, although at the chief family events, baptisms and marriages, and at the Court fêtes, concerts, balls, banquets, etc., she continued always to take the first place.

enthroned ; long live the Emperor and King ! ” a *Te Deum* was celebrated the same day at the church of Saint Ambrose, which Josephine attended with her husband.

All Lombardy was at their feet and only looking for opportunities to manifest its enthusiasm. One small incident may be taken as typical of the state of affairs generally. There was an exhibition going on at Brera, which Napoleon and Josephine went over from Milan to see. The crush was great, and every one pressed forward to see the Imperial couple. As they went up some stairs, an old man of eighty, in his anxiety to get a view of them from in front, stumbled and was knocked down by other spectators. Josephine, who was close to the old man, hastened forward and helped him to rise to his feet, while the Emperor came up and promised to look after him. Naturally cheers and blessings arose among the onlookers ; and, naturally too, the story came out a few days later in the “*Moniteur*.” No doubt the whole affair was entirely genuine and accidental, as was a somewhat similar occurrence at the time of the engagement of Mlle. de Montijo, afterwards the Empress Eugénie, to Napoleon III.,

which was also duly recorded in the "Moniteur." But both accidents were very conveniently timed, it must be allowed.

Josephine's chief satisfaction in coming to Italy was that she was able to see once more her son Eugène, as she had written to Hortense from Lyon in April. Napoleon, too, had not come to Italy entirely without thought of his step-son. On becoming King of Italy, he felt it due to his subjects to keep at Milan a properly accredited representative of himself, some one more than a mere figurehead, yet one on whom he could rely not to depart from the policy laid down by himself. He had already offered the post to Joseph, had in fact offered to make him King if he would renounce all right of succession to the throne of France. But Joseph had clung to the shadow and refused the substance. Napoleon had then thought of nominating to Italy Napoleon-Charles, Louis's son, reserving the regency to himself until the child should be of age, since the idea of Louis himself as regent did not appeal to him. It would be necessary for him formally to adopt the child, however; and nothing would persuade Louis to consent to this, although he offered to go to

Italy himself with his wife and children. In refusing the Emperor's proposal, he had alluded to "rumours previously current about this infant," which so annoyed Napoleon that he broke off the discussion at once. Overtures made by Lucien, who would not have despised the crown of Italy, came to nothing; for the condition of reconciliation with his brother was still that he should put away his wife, and no bribes could induce Lucien to do this. Jerome had not yet gained full pardon, so that all the Bonaparte brothers were now out of the question. If the Emperor went outside the circle of his immediate family, whom could he find better than Eugène Beauharnais? Eugène had always shown affection to him and much more discretion than his own brothers. He was now twenty-four years of age, had had an honourable military career, and was a success in society. He had given no proof of administrative ability, it was true, but then the opportunity had never been offered to him. At any rate, Eugène might be given a trial. He was nominated as Viceroy, without any guarantee that he might not be replaced, and was left with all the superficial appearance of power, while

Napoleon retained, for the present at least, the reality. The high affairs of the kingdom were conducted through Paris still.

The idea of parting with Eugène after the time which she had spent in his company in Milan was painful to Josephine. Mlle. Avrillon tells a story of Napoleon coming upon her one day as she wiped away her tears ; not an uncommon sight, but the adoration of Italy might have been expected to keep her in cheerful spirits. He divined the cause and said to her : “ You are crying, Josephine. That is not sensible of you. You cry because you must be separated from your son. If the absence of your children causes you so much grief, guess what I must feel. The affection which you show for them makes me feel sorely the unhappiness of having none myself.” This reminder of the fact that she had borne him no children can hardly have consoled Josephine ; but Napoleon’s consolations were often painful.

The festivities in Italy continued up to the last day of their stay. After leaving Milan, they paid visits in succession to a number of towns, including those of the celebrated “ Quadrilateral,” and on June 30 they arrived at Genoa, which

at the request of its Doge and his Government was to be merged into the French Empire. The city greeted them with a week of entertainments, of which the most notable was an aquatic fête in the middle of the harbour, where a temple and grounds had been constructed upon five large rafts moored together. Here they were entertained by music, while fireworks from the mole and illuminations on land and sea lit up the scene. At the end the temple was rowed over bodily to the shore and landed Napoleon and Josephine at the steps of the Doria Palace.

But the brilliant spectacles and enthusiastic receptions had lasted long enough. On reaching Turin from Genoa Napoleon got news from France which made it necessary to return at once. Intending to travel at full speed, he proposed to Josephine that she should follow him at her leisure. She showed a great reluctance to let him go alone and besought him to take her with him. At last he said: "Well, then, you won't have your ordinary *migraine*? If you promise me that, I will take you." She promised and, strange to say, kept her promise, though they travelled in the one carriage, which did not stop until they reached Fontainebleau

on July 11. They had been absent for one hundred days, during which time there had hardly been a break in the round of pomp and adulation. To furnish a piquant contrast to the high living of Italy, their home-coming had been so rapid that no one expected them at Fontainebleau on the evening when they arrived and no preparations had been made to receive them. There was not even a meal ready, and the porter at the château, who had been Napoleon's cook in Egypt, as it happened, was called upon to provide his master and mistress with an improvised supper from what food he could lay his hands upon.

CHAPTER XXII

JOSEPHINE IN GERMANY

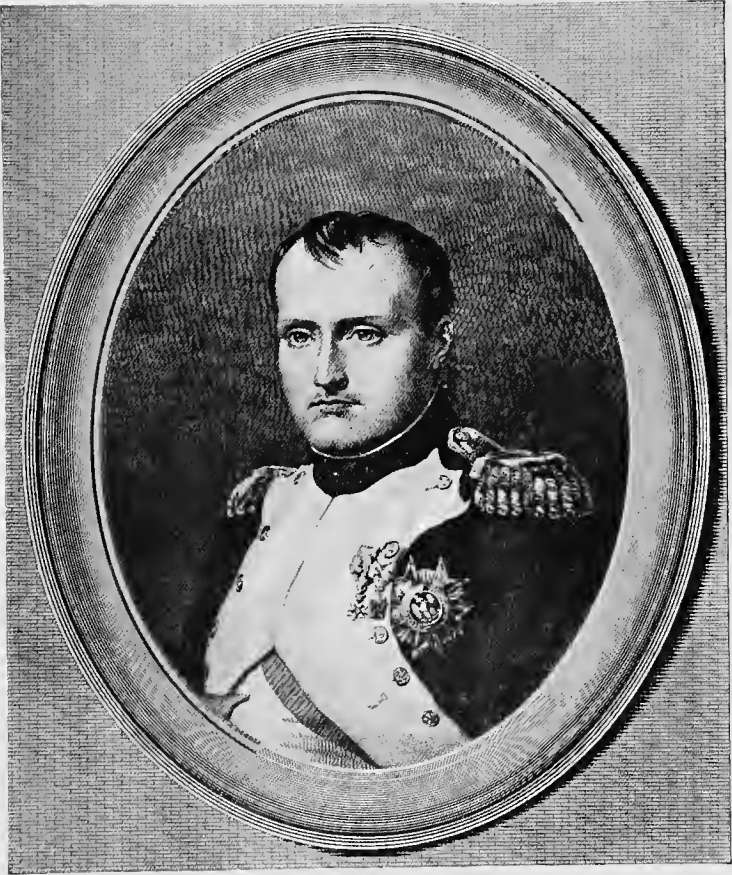
THE news which had put so abrupt an end to the triumphal tour in Italy was that of the formation of a general European coalition against France, which called for the immediate presence in Paris of the Emperor. It was against Austria that Napoleon determined to strike the first blow, and at the end of September he started for the German frontier. Josephine, who had just spent her usual season at Plombières, accompanied him as far as Strasbourg, where he made a four days' stay ; and when he went on to take command of the Army in the field, instead of returning to Paris she continued still at Strasbourg. The reason for her stay here is not quite so obvious as the Court historians would make out. According to them, Josephine's anxiety to receive news quickly from the scene of war was such that she persuaded Napoleon to allow her at least to remain near

the Rhine, if he could not take her with him. No letters from her to him exist to show whether she made this plea alone or urged other reasons as well. But from his brief notes written to her during the campaign at Austerlitz, it is evident that he agreed to allow her to come to him as soon as possible.¹ Naturally, one would think, her place would have been in Paris during the Emperor's absence, if only to stimulate the life of the capital. Napoleon, however, does not suggest her return thither. There was some reason why both he and she thought her presence there at the moment unnecessary or undesirable. It appears most likely that the ill-will of the Bonaparte family was feared, especially after the assignment of Italy to Eugène instead of to one of the brothers. Napoleon was under no

¹ "I should much have wished to see you ; but do not count on my summoning you except in the event of an armistice or of winter quarters " (Augsburg, October 23, 1805). "The moment it is possible I will send for you " (Vienna, November 15). "I shall be very glad to see you the moment affairs allow me to do so " (Vienna, November 16). It may be noted that Napoleon's letters of this period, though invariably affectionate, are indeed very different from those of his first campaign, for instance. As Imbert de Saint-Amand truly says ("La Cour de l'Impératrice Joséphine," 193), they are "the letters of a good husband, calmed by nearly ten years of married life, but in no way the letters of a lover."

illusions now as to the treatment which his wife would be likely to receive in his absence at the hand of his own kinsmen and kinswomen. But doubtless also he allowed himself to be influenced by appeals from Josephine about her anxiety to get news from him earlier than she would be able to if she went back to Paris—appeals partly genuine and partly cloaking her growing terror at separation from him who was the source of all that now made life pleasant to her.

Josephine lived at Strasbourg in the old episcopal palace, close to the Cathedral, where once Marie-Antoinette had resided as dauphine. Having been converted during the Revolution into a municipal building, it had been offered by the town as an Imperial palace when the Empire began, and had been restored sufficiently well to make it a more comfortable dwelling than most of the so-called palaces in the Rhine neighbourhood at which Josephine occasionally stopped. Here she spent two months in the midst of a steadily growing state as the Emperor's successes increased. Receptions, balls, concerts, theatricals, and dinners occupied her evenings more and more, and visitors hastened to pay their respects to her, both French notables on



NAPOLEON.

From an engraving after the picture by C. Steube.

their way to join the army and German princes eager to win her favour. Josephine threw herself wholeheartedly into the task of pleasing Strasbourg and its visitors. The town was delighted with her. Seldom had it enjoyed so brilliant a social triumph, and never had its tradespeople so lavish a purchaser among them. Napoleon was not there, as in Paris, to keep jewellers, milliners, and all the other tempters from the door, and Josephine could without restraint gratify her inordinate love of spending money. It was with genuine feelings of sorrow that the Strasbourgers heard of her approaching departure. On November 16 Napoleon wrote to her to go to Munich by way of Baden and Stuttgart. "You will give at Stuttgart," he commanded, "a wedding present to the Princess Paul. Fifteen to twenty thousand francs will be sufficient; the rest will be for presents at Munich to the daughters of the Electress of Bavaria." He prescribed her conduct in Germany: "Be polite, but receive all the homage that is offered. Everything is owed to you, and you owe nothing except politeness." Napoleon the director of his wife's behaviour was not forgotten in the preparations for Austerlitz.

Josephine left Strasbourg on November 28, escorted by detachments of infantry and cavalry and sped by artillery salutes and the cheers of the townspeople. At Rastadt she was met by the Elector of Baden, an old man of seventy-six, who had already visited her at Stuttgart. Before she reached Karlsruhe the Margrave Louis met her and conducted her under the triumphal arches erected by the town and past the hundred-foot high column bearing the inscription "*Josephinæ, Galliarum Augustæ.*" Volleys of artillery, peals of bells, and a general illumination welcomed her entry that evening into Karlsruhe when the Elector brought her to the palace prepared for her stay. Similar scenes awaited her at Stuttgart on the night of November 30, Würtemberg's ruling family conceding to her in full the homage which Napoleon had declared to be her due, escorting her to the Bavarian frontier three days later, and only taking leave of her after a magnificent luncheon at the château of Geppingen. Her arrival at Munich on December 5 found her in such a state of collapse that she was obliged to retire to bed as soon as she arrived. But, much as the combination of travelling and constant festivities

always fatigued her, there was little time for rest. It was perhaps therefore excusable, at Munich at least, that her letters to her husband were never written. We find him addressing her from Brunn on December 19 in this playfully reproachful strain :

“ Great Empress, not a letter from you since your departure from Strasbourg. You have been to Baden, Stuttgart, Munich, without writing a word to us. That is not very amiable nor loving ! I am still at Brunn. The Russians have gone ; there is a truce. In a few days I shall see what I can do. Deign from the height of your splendour to pay a little attention to your slaves.

“ NAPOLEON.”

There was a great deal to be done by Josephine at Munich. While the electoral family was lavishing on her all its attentions, Josephine in return was distributing a shower of presents in accordance with Napoleon’s wishes. She expended over eighty thousand francs on diamonds, etc., to be given away in Munich. To the Electress she presented a cashmere shawl ; an act which must have cost Josephine a pang,

for it was the first she had ever had. She moved in a constant stream of gifts, generous and amiable.

As might be imagined, there was policy underlying the conduct which Napoleon had enjoined on his wife. How much foreknowledge Josephine had of this policy may be gathered from a letter which she wrote to Hortense from Munich. There is no date, but her solitary stay at the Bavarian capital lasted from December 5 to December 31, and the letter appears to belong to the early part of the visit.

“ Here I am at Munich, my dear Hortense,” she wrote, “ a little tired but in good health. I have received your letter and was very pleased with it ; but I am extremely surprised at the rumours of which you speak. Surely if there had been really a question of your brother’s marriage, you are the first person whom I would have told. Of course I heard that the German papers spoke of it, while I was at Strasbourg. I remember that at that time everybody believed in this marriage. I found myself the only one not in the secret. You know very well, my dear, that the Emperor, who

has never said a word to me on the subject, would not marry Eugène without my being informed. However, I accept the public rumours. I should much like her as a daughter-in-law. She has a charming character and is as beautiful as an angel; she combines a beautiful face and as beautiful a figure as I know. . . .”

The rumour of which Josephine spoke was to the effect that Eugène Beauharnais was to marry Augusta, daughter of the Elector of Bavaria. The Princess was already engaged to Prince Charles of Baden, who was brother of her father's second wife. But Napoleon did not intend to let this obstacle stand in the way of his wishes (which the rumour accurately represented), and he had already in mind the scheme which he soon put into execution with regard to Prince Charles of Baden. Why Josephine was kept in the dark and allowed to gather from popular gossip the match proposed for her son, we do not know. She was assigned, however, an important part in bringing the Elector's family over to favour the scheme and played it well, if unconsciously. When the Emperor came to Munich his wife fell back into a humble place; but in her twenty-six days without

him she paved the way for the success of his project.

Peace between France and Austria was signed at Presburg on December 26. The treaty included provisions very advantageous to Bavaria, Würtemberg, and Baden, the first two electorates being turned into kingdoms. In return for his favour, Napoleon required of the recipients their consent to three marriages—those of Augusta of Bavaria to Eugène Beauharnais, of Charles of Baden to Stephanie Beauharnais, and of Catherine of Würtemberg to Jerome Bonaparte, who was now to receive his reward for abandoning Elizabeth Patterson.

It was after midnight of the last day of 1805 and by the light of torches that Napoleon entered Munich and rejoined the wife whom he had quitted three months ago. He lost no time before bringing about the first of his international weddings. In spite of the efforts of Josephine, the way was not yet quite clear. The Elector Maxmilian Joseph, now King of Bavaria, was willing that his daughter should become Eugène's wife. But the Electress Caroline was not won over, even by Josephine's cashmere shawl. The former Baden Princess

was attached to her brother and much wished him to marry her step-daughter. She was not dazzled by the prospect of the Beauharnais alliances. Moreover, she had not forgiven Napoleon for the execution of the Duc d'Enghien, captured after a scandalous violation of the territory of Baden. Napoleon laid siege to her now with such amiable persistency that he excited Josephine's jealousy. Caroline was only thirty years of age and was reputed a charming woman. But Napoleon had no intention beyond gaining her consent to Augusta's marriage with Eugène, and in this he succeeded, although he considered it advisable to stop in Munich himself until the wedding should take place under his own eyes. On January 4 he wrote summoning Eugène to him. The young Viceroy arrived six days later, and was the innocent cause of a curious scene. As soon as he reached Munich he was seized upon by his step-father. It was morning, and Josephine was not yet out of bed. When, however, she learnt that her son was in the Palace and had not come to see her first of all, she gave way to a fit of weeping, which was only stayed when Napoleon came into her room leading Eugène by the hand.

Coming toward the bed, the Emperor gave the young man a push forward and said : " Here's your big lout of a son. I am bringing him to you." Josephine threw her arms around Eugène and clasped him to her breast.

On January 14 Eugène married Augusta in the presence of his step-father, Josephine, and the Bavarian Royal family. Eugène now dropped his name of Beauharnais for a more glorious one. For the first clause of the marriage treaty ran as follows : " His Majesty the Emperor of the French and King of Italy shall treat His Imperial Highness the Prince Eugène as son of France." And at the civil ceremony the name of the bridegroom appeared as " Eugène-Napoléon de France." ¹

So it was with her position seemingly still further strengthened that Josephine returned to Paris with the Emperor in January 1806. So firmly attached to her was Napoleon, it

¹ Writing to the Senate two days before the marriage, Napoleon says : " We have determined to adopt as our son the Prince Eugène, Grand Chancellor of state in our Empire and Viceroy of our Kingdom of Italy : we have called him, after ourselves and our natural and legitimate children, to the throne of Italy . . . it being understood that in no case or circumstance can our adoption authorise either him or his descendants to make any pretensions to the throne of France."

appeared, that not only had he thought it necessary to have her crowned and consecrated with him, but he also had made her son his heir in Italy and was preparing to adopt her niece and make a princely marriage for her as if she were in reality his daughter. He was treating the Beauharnais exactly as though they were Bonapartes. What greater sign could he give of his attachment to the wife who had borne him no children ?

After speeding Eugène and Augusta on their way to Italy, Napoleon and Joséphine left Munich for Paris by way of Stuttgart and Carlsruhe. Late on the night of January 26 they were back in the Tuileries. According to the usual custom they showed themselves as soon as possible at the Opera. In honour of the campaign of Austerlitz a gala performance was given, concluding with a patriotic spectacle of the return of the victorious army, a ballet of the nations, in which the peasantry of France appeared in their local costumes, and a cantata specially written for the occasion by Esménard and the composer Stobelt. The arrival of Emperor and Empress in the Opera House was the signal for an extraordinary scene, every

one in the audience standing up, cheering, and waving laurel-branches which had been distributed in advance. The laurels might be a pre-arranged effect ; but about the general spontaneity and the unanimity of the welcome there could be no doubt. The Republic was truly at an end, and already its very calendar had gone when *frimaire* of the Year XIV. had ceased abruptly on New Year's Day of 1806.

The marriage of Stéphanie Beauharnais, which followed so soon after that of her cousin Eugène, was a proof of the ascendancy of the Emperor Napoleon in Germany as well as of his affection for his wife. Stéphanie, who was not quite seventeen, was the grand-daughter of the well-known Countess Fanny, and had gone to Mme. Campan's school like her elder cousins, Hortense and Emilie. She had a certain resemblance to Hortense, with her fair hair, blue eyes, and good figure, and her combination of grace and gaiety. But her father was only a French senator of no particular distinction or position. Prince Charles of Baden, on the other hand, was of a very old noble family of Germany and had sisters married to the rulers of Russia, Sweden, and Bavaria.

The match might have seemed an extremely unequal one but for the power of Napoleon to make princes and princesses with the stroke of a wand. He was taken with Stephanie (to the edification of his slanderers, who declared that Josephine was jealous and had cause to be so), and determined to act the fairy godfather to her. The opposition of Prince Charles's mother and sister Caroline to the match were unavailing. Charles himself consented to receive Stéphanie in the place of the Princess Augusta, who had been torn away from him; and his grandfather of Baden could not afford to displease his great patron Napoleon. The necessary transformation of the bride was accomplished with remarkable speed. On the Emperor's return to Paris Stéphanie came to reside at the Tuileries, although her father was still alive in Paris. On February 17 the marriage contract was signed with Baden. On March 2 Prince Charles arrived in Paris. On the 4th the adoption of the girl as the Emperor's daughter, with the name of Stéphanie Napoléon, was made public. On April 8 the wedding took place in the Tuileries chapel, Cardinal Caprara conducting the service, Na-

oleon giving away the bride, and Josephine, with a headdress of pearls which cost a million francs, having a throne beside her husband facing the altar. The scene was the most brilliant which had yet been witnessed at any event in the Bonaparte and Beauharnais families, with the single exception of the Coronation at Notre-Dame. A few days later Charles and Stéphanie left for Baden, to the great satisfaction of Josephine, said the gossips.¹

One of Josephine's satisfactions in returning to Paris after the German visit had been her reunion with Hortense, whose companionship, in spite of what some of the memoir-writers say, was always a pleasure to her. But she was not suffered to enjoy this satisfaction long ; for the Emperor had determined to turn Holland into a kingdom and to put his brother Louis at its head. Louis showed no anxiety to go to reign at The Hague ; the reason was not that he did not think himself capable of reigning,

¹ The Duchesse d'Abrantès, who says that she had met few women who seemed so pleasing to her as Stéphanie at this period, is by no means so kind to Prince Charles. He had the sulky air of a child put in the corner, she declares, and was a very disagreeable prince and above all a disagreeable bridegroom.

but that he feared that the Dutch climate would not suit the health which caused him so much trouble, real or imaginary. Napoleon, however, would hear of no objections. "Better die on a throne than live as a mere French prince," he told Louis, and proclaimed him King on June 5. He seems to have had misgivings about his brother's capacity; or perhaps he wished to spur him into proving it. The story is told that on the day after the announcement he was sitting in the company of Hortense and her elder child, now three years and a half old. He made Napoleon-Charles repeat to him La Fontaine's version of the Frogs and their King Log, and at the end he laughed heartily, and, pinching her ear in his well-known way, asked: "What do you think of that, Hortense?"

Whatever Hortense thought of the applicability of the fable, she was no more delighted than her husband at the idea of going to Holland. To her it meant exile from the gaieties of Paris and from the society of her mother; and exile, too, in the company of a most uncongenial husband, who took no pains to conceal his mistrust and suspicion of her. Yet resistance

was impossible, and in the middle of the month the new King and Queen, with their two children, set out for the Dutch capital. Josephine was most loth to see them go. A month later we find her writing from Saint-Cloud to her daughter :

“ Since your departure I have been constantly ill, melancholy, and unhappy. I have even been obliged to stay in bed, having had some attacks of fever. The sickness has quite gone, but the grief remains. How could I not suffer from it, being separated from a daughter like you, loving, sweet, and amiable, the joy of my life ? . . . How is your husband ? And are my grand-children well ? Good heavens, how melancholy I am at not seeing them sometimes ! And your health, my dear Hortense, is it good ? If ever you are ill, let me know ; I will come at once to the side of my beloved daughter.”

The remainder of this letter of July 15, which is longer than most of Josephine's preserved in the collection edited by Hortense, is less gloomy in tone. The Empress gives various items of family news, including the announcement of her cousin Stéphanie Tascher's engagement to the Prince d'Arenberg—another in-

stance of the way in which the family of Josephine benefited by her marriage to the man with "the sword and the cloak," although it is true that the Arenberg wedding, which took place in January 1808, ended unhappily. Stéphanie had struggled against the marriage and after it refused to live at Brussels with her husband, against whom she took a great aversion. The Emperor threatened to send her back to him with gendarmes. "As you like, sire," she replied. "At least when they see me arrive like that they will know I came against my will." The argument convinced Napoleon, who made her an allowance to live upon without her husband.

CHAPTER XXIII

DOMESTIC SORROWS

AFTER the departure of Hortense to The Hague, Josephine divided her summer between Saint-Cloud and Malmaison, the latter place at least solacing her to some extent for her loss, since there were always her garden, her flowers, and her pets. Her next surviving letter to Hortense is written in a much more cheerful strain than that quoted at the end of the preceding chapter.

“ I am very happy myself, especially at the present moment,” she writes, “ for I am to go with the Emperor and I am making my preparations for the journey. I assure you that this war, if it must take place, causes me no fear ; the more I am near the Emperor, the less fear I shall have, and I feel that I should not live if I stayed here. Another reason for my joy is at seeing you again at Mayence. The Emperor bids me tell you that he has just given

an army of eighty thousand men to the King of Holland, and that his command will extend quite close to Mayence. He thinks that you may come to stop with me at Mayence. Guess whether that is good news, my dear Hortense, for a mother who loves you so fondly. Every day we shall get news from the Emperor and your husband: we shall rejoice over it together. . . .”

This letter is undated, but it was evidently written in September 1806. Napoleon was planning his campaign against Prussia and Russia. If he promised at first to take Josephine with him into Germany, he appears to have changed his mind. On September 24 he announced to her that he was quitting Paris at once and leaving her behind. She besought him not to desert her, but received a refusal. So persistent, however, were her prayers that at length he gave way and the same night they started, Josephine having no time to take more than a single waiting-woman with her, and leaving orders for part of her Household to follow her to Mayence.

As before the short war against Austria, Josephine's reluctance to allow the Emperor

to quit her and to remain behind in Paris without him was painfully apparent. If jealousy was the chief cause of her conduct, she was justified in her fears ; for it was in this campaign that Napoleon was destined to meet the only woman who proved a serious rival in his affections to the wife who had so great a hold over him.

The journey to Mayence was made with great speed, the only stop being for a few hours at Metz, and Mayence being reached on September 28. Four days were all the time which the Emperor could allow for his halt there. At the last moment the parting proved unwontedly distressing to both. Napoleon pressed the weeping Josephine to his breast and spoke of his pain at their separation. Josephine's grief grew more and more violent and had such an effect upon her husband that he too wept, and then broke down completely, having to take some of his favourite orange-flower water before he felt sufficiently well to get into his carriage and proceed on his way.

Left in the palace at Mayence, Josephine was soon joined by those of her Household who had been commanded to share her stay

there. Hortense also came to her with her children from Holland, but does not seem to have cured her mother of her grief. In a letter written on October 5 Napoleon says to her : “ There is no objection to the Princess of Baden going to Mayence. I do not know why you weep. You do wrong in making yourself ill. Hortense is rather pedantic ; she loves to give advice. She has written to me, I am answering her. She must be gay and happy. Courage and gaiety—that is the prescription.”

The Princess of Baden is, of course, the former Stéphanie Beauharnais, who now came to Mayence. In spite of the presence of both daughter and niece, Josephine’s tears did not stop, for on November 1 Napoleon wrote again : “ Talleyrand has arrived and tells me that you do nothing but weep. What do you want ? You have your daughter, your grand-children, and good news. These are plenty of reasons for being content and happy.”

Strange to tell, although her letters as usual do not survive, Josephine appears at this period to have written more to Napoleon than he wrote to her. His note of October 23, from Wittenberg, begins : “ I have received several

letters from you. I am only sending you a line." None of his communications to her during her stay at Mayence deserve to be called more than "a line"; and the passionless, though not unaffectionate, conciseness which marks nearly all is more noticeable than in those of the campaign of 1805.

It is upon the letters of Napoleon to his wife that we have chiefly to rely for knowledge as to how Josephine fared at this time. Outwardly her circumstances were very good. She was in the midst of her best-loved family circle. She was in constant receipt of excellent tidings from the seat of war. German princes and princesses, from Frankfort, Nassau, Saxe-Gotha, Saxe-Weimar, and Hesse-Darmstadt, were in constant attendance upon her. At Mayence a continual series of receptions, dinners, operas, concerts, etc., occupied her time, and as at Strasbourg and Munich in the previous year, she was able to distribute all around her jewellery and other presents broadcast. But plainly she was rapidly bored and wished for nothing but permission to join the Emperor. In his letter of November 16 he says: "I am grieved to think that you grow weary at Mayence. If the

journey were not so long you could come here, for the enemy no longer exists or he is beyond the Vistula." Six days later he wrote: "I shall make up my mind in a few days to summon you here or to send you to Paris." In another four days he seemed on the point of granting her request. "I will see in a couple of days if you may come," he wrote from Cüstrin. "You may hold yourself in readiness." On the morrow he spoke of fetching her to meet him in Berlin. So on to December 20 he continued to talk about sending for her in a few days' time. But after this there came a change, and the alternative of her return to Paris, mentioned vaguely in his letters of November 22 and December 15, became more precisely formulated in those of January 3, 7, 8, 11, 18 and 23. In the last, written in Warsaw, his intention was unmistakable. "It is impossible for me to let women take a journey like this. . . . Return to Paris, be gay and content there; perhaps I too shall be there soon."

In addition to her own weariness, the discontent of her Household at the long stay in Mayence sorely troubled Josephine. Mme. de la Rochefoucauld, her Lady of Honour, in parti-

cular, was in open revolt and spoke rebelliously against her mistress. Josephine's complaints to Napoleon brought back from him the advice to pack the busybodies home. But such worries were small in comparison with another, which it is possible to divine from Napoleon's letters. It is clear that Josephine by some means gathered that she had more serious cause than hitherto for the suspicions which she nourished with regard to her husband's faithfulness to herself. Her suspicions actually preceded the event, it would appear, for Napoleon's first meeting with his beautiful Pole is assigned to January 1, 1807, whereas Josephine's complaints must have begun a month earlier. He made many efforts to reassure her. From Posen on December 2 he wrote: "All these Polish women are true Frenchwomen; but there is only one woman for me. . . . These nights are long, all alone." On December 3 he rallied her on her jealousy, adding: "You are wrong; nothing is farther from my thoughts, and in the deserts of Poland one dreams little of the belles." His note from Pultusk on December 31 begins: "I laughed much when I got your last letters. You are

imagining ideas about the belles of Great Poland which they do not deserve." In the letter of January 23, 1807, already partly quoted above, he said: "I laughed at what you told me about marrying a husband in order to be with him. I thought, in my ignorance, that the wife was made for the husband, the husband for country, family, and glory. Excuse my ignorance. One is always learning something from the ladies. Good-bye, *mon amie*. Believe me that it costs me much not to send for you. Say to yourself: 'It is a proof how precious I am to him.'"

Soon after this letter from Warsaw was written Josephine had yielded to the Emperor's commands and had left Mayence for Paris. Stopping for one night at Strasbourg, where she was warmly welcomed, she reached the Tuileries on the last day of January. Paris was badly in need of a reviving influence, for the combination of the war and the absence of the Court had produced there a state of stagnation which might easily lead to discontent. The Empress's return brought about an improvement; but she herself found it difficult to follow Napoleon's advice to "be gay and

content" there. According to Mme. de Rémusat, certain Polish ladies, lately come to Paris, had brought with them news of the Emperor's passion for their beautiful young compatriot Countess Marie Walewska, to whom Napoleon after two brief meetings in public, had written: "I saw only you, I admired only you, I desire only you." His letter of course remained private, but the way in which he had gained his desire was but too well known.

Suspicion had turned to certainty, and it was in vain that Napoleon paid unremitting attention to his correspondence with Josephine. Brief notes continued to reach her from him at Eylau, Liebstadt, and Osterode, assuring her of his constant love for her. From the last place he wrote on March 15 a letter concluding with the words: "Put no belief in all the evil reports which may be circulated. Never doubt my feelings, and be without the slightest anxiety." It is impossible to resist the conviction that Josephine had mentioned something of what she had heard through the Polish ladies spoken of by Mme. de Rémusat. It appears also that she had again urged him to let her come to him in Poland. For in a

letter of March 27 he says : “ You must not think of travelling this summer. It is impossible. You could not rove about inns and camps. I want, as much as you, to see you and to live quietly.”

Napoleon, however, was not “ roving about inns and camps.” Early in April he was, as he let her know, at the “ very beautiful château ” of Finkenstein, where he had established his headquarters. He did not tell Josephine that Mme. Walewska also spent three weeks there, although he sent several notes to her during this period. On May 10 he wrote at greater length, beginning :

“ I have your letter. I do not understand what you say to me about ladies in correspondence with me. I only love my little Josephine, kind, pouting, and capricious, who knows how to quarrel, as she does everything else, gracefully ; for she is always amiable, except of course when she is jealous ; then she becomes a very devil. But to return to these ladies. If I were to notice any of them, I should like them to be rosebuds, and none of them fulfil that condition.”

It is certain that no such cajoleries on the

part of Napoleon had any effect upon his now legitimately jealous wife. But an event came to drive from her head for a while even her fear and indignation about her Polish rival. She had been passing the spring between Paris and Malmaison, her interest in the work in progress at the latter place proving beneficial to her health.¹ On May 6 she had gone to Saint-Cloud, when suddenly the news arrived from Holland that her eldest grandson was dead. Napoleon-Charles had succumbed to an attack of croup at The Hague on the night of May 4-5. Joséphine obtained the permission of the Council of State to leave Paris and set out on the 10th for the north, a temporary collapse preventing an earlier start. On the night of the 14th, as soon as she had arrived at the palace of Laeken, near Brussels, she wrote to her daughter as follows :

“ I have just reached the château of Laeken, my dear daughter. It is from there that I am writing, it is there that I am waiting for you. Come and restore me to life ; your company is necessary to me, and you ought also to want to see me and to weep with your mother.

¹ See her letter to Hortense, March 29, 1807.



PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON.

From an engraving by Hall, after a drawing by Stewart.

I should indeed have liked to come further ; but my strength has failed me, and besides, I have not had time to let the Emperor know. I have got back heart enough to come as far as this ; I hope that you will have sufficient to come and see your mother. Good-bye, my dear daughter. I am overcome with fatigue but still more by sorrow.

“ JOSEPHINE.”

On the following day Hortense reached Laeken, accompanied by Louis and her remaining child. Her grief was intense. M. de Rémusat, who had accompanied Josephine from Paris, wrote to his wife a touching account of it. “ The Queen,” he said, “ has but one thought, that of the loss which has befallen her. She speaks only of *him*. Not a tear, only a cold calm, an almost total silence, except when she breaks it to wring the hearts of those who listen to her. If she sees any one whom she has seen before with her child, she looks at him with an expression of kindly interest and says in a hushed voice : ‘ You know he is dead.’ When she came to her mother, she said to her : ‘ It is not long since he was here

with me ; I sat there with him on my knees.' . . . She heard it strike ten, and turned to one of her ladies. ' You know,' she said, ' it was at ten o'clock he died.' "

The blow was very severe for all. Not only Josephine, Hortense, and Louis were overwhelmed with grief, but Napoleon also. In spite of the forcedly reasonable tone of his letter of May 15, written when the news reached him, it is easy to see that he was deeply affected.

" I can imagine," he wrote, " all the pain which poor Napoleon's death must cause you : you can understand the sorrow which I feel. I wish I were by you to see that you were moderate and sensible in your grief. You have had the happiness never to lose a child ; but it is one of the conditions and sorrows inseparable from human wretchedness. Let me hear that you have been reasonable and that you are keeping well. Would you add to my sorrow ? "

A fortnight later he wrote to Josephine again from Marienbad : " All the letters from Saint-Cloud tell me that you are constantly weeping. This is not right. You must keep well and be content." The advice was rather futile to a

loving grandmother, more especially to one so easily moved to tears as Josephine ; but, of course, it was the only advice which Napoleon could give in the circumstances. He hid his own grief effectively,¹ but he had in hand the preparations for hurling the Grand Army across the Vistula, and domestic sorrows must yield to affairs of war. The death of the nephew of whom he had always made such a favourite in reality left a permanent void in his heart, and there can be no doubt that it had a considerable effect on his conduct in respect to Josephine. He had long been willing to adopt Napoleon-Charles as his own son, in which case he might have dispensed with a son of his own. But no

¹ The story told by Talleyrand, however, and reported by Mme. de Rémusat ("Mémoires," i. 186), of the Emperor's callous speech when the news of the child's death arrived, is almost grotesquely improbable ; and, besides, Talleyrand's stories are generally under suspicion. Josephine appears to have had no doubt that Napoleon was sincerely grieved, in spite of the orders which he sent both to her and to Hortense to be sensible and even gay (!) ; for she wrote to Hortense : "The Emperor has been deeply affected. In all his letters he tries to inspire me with courage ; but I know that he suffers much at this unhappy event" (letter from Saint-Cloud, June 4). M. Masson points out that Napoleon wrote to all his correspondents about his nephew's death, twenty times to Josephine, five or six times to Hortense, and also to Joseph, Jerome, Fouché, and Monge.

other child took the dead one's place, and the necessity for an heir brought forward once more the question of divorcing Josephine and marrying a younger woman. Thus it was that, although she can hardly have suspected it at the time, Josephine lost more than a beloved grandchild through the fatal effect of the Dutch climate on the little boy who died at The Hague.

After a few mournful days at Laeken, Josephine returned to Paris with Hortense and Napoleon-Louis, while the King of Holland went back to his capital. Most of the remainder of May was spent quietly at Malmaison. At the end of the month Hortense went, by doctor's advice, to take the waters at Cauterets in the Pyrenees, while Josephine moved to Saint-Cloud. Napoleon-Louis was temporarily sent back to Laeken to await his father. But Josephine was desirous of having her grandson with her at Saint-Cloud and obtained Louis's consent. On June 4 she wrote to her daughter at Cauterets : " The King reached Saint-Leu yesterday night. He has informed me that he is coming to see me to-day. He will leave me the little one in his absence. You know how I love the

child and what care I will take of him.”¹ Seven days later, after the child’s arrival, she writes : “ Your son is wonderfully well. He amuses me very much. He is so sweet ; I find he has all the ways of the poor child whom we mourn.” In another letter, although she begins with melancholy reflections on the child who had gone—“ We have lost what was most worthy of being loved ; my tears flow as on the first day ”—she concludes with the assurance : “ Your son is wonderfully well, he is charming.” Josephine seemed to give an equal love to all Hortense’s boys, Napoleon-Charles, Napoleon-Louis, and later Louis-Napoleon, the future Emperor. Whatever Nature did not make her, it did at least make her a most affectionate grandmother.

¹ Josephine continues : “ I want the King to follow you. It will be a consolation, dear Hortense, for both of you to meet again. All the letters which I have received from him since your departure have been full of his affection for you. Your heart is too tender not to be touched by it.” Louis and Hortense were indeed temporarily reconciled after the death of their first-born ; but unhappily the improved state of affairs did not last long.

CHAPTER XXIV

FEARS OF DIVORCE REVIVED

WHILE Josephine was at Saint-Cloud enjoying the company of her surviving grandson, Napoleon was completing his campaign against the Russians and forcing on the Tsar Alexander the Treaty of Tilsit. In July he was preparing to return to France. On the 18th he wrote to Josephine from Dresden in a strain which almost recalls the letters from Italy. "I am more than half way on the road to you," he says. "It is possible that one of these fine nights I shall fall upon Saint-Cloud like a jealous man, I warn you. Good-bye, *mon amie*, I shall have great pleasure in seeing you." At six o'clock in the morning of July 27 he reached Saint-Cloud, having been absent nearly a year from the city, which now received him with the most extravagant expressions of admiration and devotion. The silence of astonishment, declared the Prefect of the Seine,

was the only suitable way of manifesting the country's feelings ; but neither he nor any one else restricted himself to silence when there was an opportunity to speak.

In the opinion of her carefully watching contemporaries, the Empress was not one of those to whom the Emperor's return brought unmixed pleasure. Unwilling as she had been to part with him, she found a considerable alteration in their relations when he returned.¹ The two principal causes for this were the death of his possible heir by adoption and the love affair which had made him unfaithful to her in Poland. Gossip also said that the birth of a son to a young lady who had been reader to his sister Caroline had at last convinced him that it was solely Josephine's fault that he had no legitimate heir. Gossip was right. The child Léon, who had been born on December 13, 1806, to Mlle. Eléonore Denuelle, had the Emperor for father. He had met the handsome young girl, a former

¹ Prince Metternich, the Austrian Ambassador at Paris, in a despatch quoted later in this chapter says : " The Emperor, since his return from the army, preserved toward his wife a cold and often embarrassed manner. He no longer lived in the same rooms with her, and to a great extent his daily conduct took a different turn from what it had always had."

pupil of Mme. Campan, at Caroline Murat's, had taken a fancy to her, and the rest had been easy. Josephine, however, as proofs of Napoleon's broken faith accumulated, seemed to become less able to tax him openly with misconduct. She complained freely to others, and did not hesitate, in her jealousy, to mention to her ladies (and even, it was said, her attendants) all the stories reaching her ears which malice had circulated about her husband. A certain dread, however, restrained her from making as many "scenes" before him as she had formerly made. He seemed to have grown too great a figure, perhaps. It was noticed that she gradually ceased to speak of him merely as "Bonaparte," as of old. The conqueror of Austria, Prussia, and Russia could not be called by a simple surname. He was becoming "Sire" to her as well as to the Court and the nation.

Not at once, but by degrees certainly, the idea of divorce, which had almost faded away since the days of the First Consulate, began to grow definite after Napoleon's return to France in 1807. Conspiracies were on foot, in which prominent parts were taken by Caroline and her husband Murat, as well as by Fouché, who was

no more a friend to Josephine than his own interests made it expedient, to persuade the Emperor of the necessity of taking another wife. Napoleon could not altogether refuse to recognise the possibility of having to yield to reasons of State. According to Mme. de Rémusat, he went so far as to broach the subject to Josephine. The memoirist professes to report a conversation which, if it ever took place, she must have learnt from her mistress. Napoleon was talking to Josephine one day about the death of Napoleon-Charles and of the lack of an heir to the French throne. He went on to speak of what might be forced upon him thereby, and appealed to her to come to his assistance, if her divorce and his marriage to another should be inevitable. Speaking with emotion he said : “ If such a thing came to pass, Josephine, it would be your duty to help me to such a sacrifice. I should count upon your friendship to preserve me from the odium of this forced separation. You would take the first step, wouldn't you ? And, putting yourself in my place, you would have the courage to decide yourself upon your retirement ? ”

Whether Napoleon really expected Josephine

to answer that she would do as he wished, we do not know. He should have appreciated the desperate tenacity with which she was clinging to him, for he had abundant examples of it in the past two years. Josephine, on her part, had no intention of assisting in her own downfall. "Sire," she replied, with a calm which must have contrasted strangely with her usual tears, "you are the master and you will decide upon my fate. When you order me to leave the Tuileries I shall obey at once; but you certainly must order it positively. I am your wife; I have been crowned by you in the presence of the Pope; the worth of such honours is such that one cannot give them up of one's free will. If you divorce me, all France must know that it is you who drive me away, and she shall not be unaware either of my obedience or of my profound sorrow."

The most ardent French admirers of Napoleon have attacked Josephine's attitude as petty and really devoid of the dignity which she wished it to have in his eyes; and they blame her for forcing him to take a step which revolted his heart—to divorce her without her consent. Seeing, however, that to them, for the most

part, she appears in the light of a worthless woman, whose influence over their hero is to be deplored, it is not a little surprising that they should expect her now to have shown a self-sacrifice and strength of character which would hardly be demanded of the ordinary good wife. Josephine, at the age of forty-four, was asked to give up the husband with whom she had lived for eleven years and the throne which she had shared with him for three in order to see another woman take her place in the home and on the throne, while she retired for ever into isolation and obscurity, however comfortable they might be made for her. She would hardly have been human had she not resisted Napoleon's wish ; she surely would not have been the Josephine of old.

The calm dignity which marked her interview with Napoleon deserted her when she left his presence and was able to talk to ready listeners about the fate with which she was threatened. Her tears flowed unceasingly, and her unhappy propensity to bring up whatever remained in her mind of all the scandal and inventions of enemies which reached the Court was given free play. Her ladies and waiting-women heard

(not for the first time from her) outrageous accusations against the Emperor. Nor did she hesitate to accuse him of sinister designs against her life, if again we may believe Mme. de Rémusat, her own friend. "I will never give way to him," she cried. "I shall certainly show myself his victim. But if I end by causing him too much annoyance, who knows of what he is capable, and whether he will resist the temptation to put me out of the way?" Too much attention, of course, must not be paid to these outbursts of a naturally unbalanced mind; but they must detract considerably from our sympathy with the unfortunate woman.

Josephine's words reached the Emperor's ears and made him less inclined to dismiss the idea of divorce which hitherto he had always put aside. The Memoirs of Lucien report a speech which he is supposed to have made to his brother in Italy in the winter of 1807: "Josephine is decidedly old, and as she cannot now have any children she is very melancholy about it and tiresome. She fears divorce or even worse. Just imagine, the woman cries every time she has indigestion, because she says she believes she has been poisoned by those who want me

to marry some one else. It is detestable." The exact words may be doubtful, but the tenor of the speech has the appearance of probability. Napoleon at least would have been justified by facts in making it.

All this, however, did not take place immediately after Napoleon's return from Tilsit. No outward change occurred in Josephine's position. At the wedding of Jerome Bonaparte and Catherine of Würtemberg in August, she had even a new honour, since she was given an armchair as a right, while Madame Mère was allowed one only as a favour, and the Queen of Naples (Julie, wife of Joseph, sent to Naples in the spring) had none at all. Jerome's marriage to the Princess Sophia-Dorothea-Frederika-Catherine, like his elevation to the throne of the new kingdom of Westphalia, was one of the results of the Treaty of Tilsit. The religious marriage took place on the evening of August 23 in the Gallery of Diana at the Tuileries, the scene being remarkably gorgeous. Those present included besides the Emperor, his wife and his mother, the Queen of Naples, the Grand Duchess of Berg (Caroline Murat), the Princess Stephanie of Baden and her husband, Prince

and Princess Borghese, the Prince of Nassau, and the Prince-Primate of Germany, who united the young King and Queen. The number of distinguished strangers present was very large, and all are said to have been struck by the hitherto unexampled display of jewellery. The picture of the wedding in the Versailles Museum is well known, representing Jerome and his wife approaching the throne of the Emperor and Empress. He saluted both previously to making his reverence to Madame Mère to ask her consent to the marriage.

During the service a heavy thunderstorm took place, ruining the illuminations prepared in the Tuileries gardens. It is recorded that Josephine said that if Catherine were a believer in omens she might expect an unhappy fate. But little attention was paid to such superstitions while the festivities in honour of the new King and Queen occupied the attention of all. It had been arranged that Jerome and Catherine should not leave for Westphalia until November and should spend the intervening time with Napoleon and Josephine. Early in September the Imperial party, including in all forty-four persons, went for ten days to Ram-

bouillet, which was little more than a hunting-box, as has been said, and sadly lacked accommodation for so many guests. Since we read that the weather was wet and all had colds, it is not surprising that visit was not enjoyed by any one except the Emperor. From Rambouillet a move was made to Fontainebleau, where Hortense, who had come to Paris from Cauterets at the end of August, joined the party, now swelled to vast proportions by arrivals from Paris and from the German principalities. The stay at Fontainebleau lasted until the middle of November and was marked by more display and ceremony than had yet been seen at the French Court. Napoleon was desirous of making his Court the most brilliant in Europe ; but his endeavours did not succeed in keeping away dulness, for he is reported to have remarked now : “ It is curious. I gathered together at Fontainebleau a great number of people, I wanted them to be amused, I arranged all their entertainments—and every one has a weary and melancholy air ! ”

Among those who showed their melancholy must have been Josephine, for she had ample reasons, apart from the fact that Napoleon had

betrayed distinct signs of at least a passing fancy for Mme. Gazzani, a beautiful Genoese whom she had made her reader on the recommendation of Talleyrand. In the first place news had reached France of the death in June of her mother. Mme. Tascher de la Pagerie had lived on at Trois-Ilets to the age of seventy, always steadfastly refusing to come to France. It was thus seventeen years since she and Josephine had last met. It is not known why she never visited her daughter, but there is nothing to indicate any estrangement between them. No public mourning was ordered, which was rather strange, seeing that the deceased was the Empress's mother.

In the second place, the return of Hortense to Paris had revealed that the reconciliation between her and Louis had been very brief, although it had resulted in the anticipation of a third child. When she and Louis reached Paris from the Pyrenees, quarrels began at once. Louis wished her to come with him to Holland. She refused, alleging that the climate was dangerous to her health and to that of Napoleon-Louis, whom she feared to see going the way of his elder brother. Louis's jealousy was also

said to have been aroused over some stories which he heard of her conduct at Cauterets before his arrival. No terms could be arranged, and Louis went off to The Hague, while Hortense, ill and despondent,¹ remained with her mother, to whom her companionship at this time can but have been an incentive to sorrow and tears.

Thirdly, at Fontainebleau Fouché approached Josephine directly on the subject of a divorce. This must have been subsequent to the conversation, if it took place as said by Mme. de Rémusat, between Napoleon and Josephine as to what would be her attitude should a divorce become necessary; for on leaving Fontainebleau Napoleon proceeded straight to Italy and remained there over the end of the year. When the Minister of Police came to Josephine, rumours of a possible divorce had already turned into common discussions of the question when Emperor and

¹ In her diary Hortense wrote: "From this time onward I knew that my ills would be without remedy; I looked on my life as entirely ruined; I felt a horror for grandeurs and the throne; I often cursed what so many people called my future; I felt myself a stranger to all the enjoyments of life, stripped of all its illusions, almost dead to all that passed about us."

Empress were not present. A description of Fouché's interview with Josephine is given in a despatch from Prince Metternich, who was a guest at Fontainebleau, to the Austrian Government.

“After a short preamble,” writes the ambassador, “he told her that, since the public weal, and above all the consolidation of the existing dynasty, demanded that the Emperor should have children, she ought to petition the Senate to join her in urging on her spouse a demand for the most painful sacrifice which his heart could make. The Empress, prepared for the subject, asked Fouché with the greatest coolness if the step which he had just taken had been at the Emperor's bidding. ‘No,’ replied he, ‘I am speaking to Your Majesty as the Minister charged with the supervision of affairs in general, as a private individual, as a subject to whom his country's glory is dear.’ ‘I am not therefore accountable to you,’ interrupted the Empress. ‘I look on my union with the Emperor as recorded in the book of destiny. I will have no explanations except with him and shall never do except what he may order.’

“Several days passed before there was a

question of anything between the Imperial couple, when suddenly the Emperor began again to share his wife's room and seized a propitious moment to ask her the reason of the sadness which he had observed in her for some time.¹ The Empress then told him of her conversation with Fouché. The Emperor bore witness that he had never entrusted his Minister with such a mission. He added that she ought to know him well enough to be sure that he needed no intermediary between himself and her. He made her promise that she would tell him of all she might hear of the sequel of this affair."

Josephine had refused to believe Fouché's statement that he had acted on his own responsibility. "Is it not evident," she asked Lavallette, husband of her niece Emilie, "that Fouché was sent by the Emperor and that my fate is decided? Alas, to leave the throne is little

¹ Napoleon's own version of the explanation makes Mme. de Rémusat come to him from Josephine just as he was going to bed, at one o'clock. "My curiosity was piqued," he says. "I received her. It was indeed a curious matter, for I learnt that it concerned a repudiation of me by my wife. I went immediately to Josephine and disabused her mind, giving her an assurance that, if reasons of State should ever determine me to break our bonds, it was from me that she should receive the first intelligence."

enough to me ! But to lose at the same time the man to whom I have devoted my fondest affections—such a sacrifice is beyond my strength.” Nor did Napoleon’s denial of an order to Fouché persuade her. She was not long in receiving from the Minister a letter in which he put on paper the arguments to which she had refused to listen a few days before. On the advice of M. de Rémusat, to whom she showed the letter, she took it to Napoleon and read it to him. The Emperor, in indignation real or simulated, offered to deprive Fouché of his office, and actually wrote to him on November 5, telling him to “cease meddling, directly or indirectly, with an affair which could be no concern of his at all.” For Josephine he was full of caresses and protestations of his ignorance of Fouché’s action ; but she was not to be convinced, even though the rumours of divorce temporarily ceased, after the Police Minister had recognised that he must proceed more cautiously, unless he were prepared to lose his post a second time.

The party at Fontainebleau broke up without anything definite having occurred with regard to the question of divorce. Napoleon started

on November 16 for Italy, in connection with his design to close the Mediterranean against the English fleet. He refused to take Josephine with him in spite of her prayers that he should allow her to accompany him and to see Eugène with his wife and little daughter, named after her Josephine. He had, however, good reason for not taking her. His first letter from Italy, dated Milan, November 25, 1807, began: "I have been here, *mon amie*, for two days. I am very glad not to have brought you; you would have suffered horribly in the crossing of the Mount Cenis, where a tempest delayed me twenty-four hours."

Josephine had been accompanied back to Paris by Jerome and his bride, who had intended to leave at once for Westphalia by way of Würtemberg. Delayed by the slight illness of Catherine they remained until nearly the end of November before setting out for Stuttgart. Their departure did not leave Josephine without plenty of society. Some of the German princes who had been at Fontainebleau still lingered on, among them the brother of the Queen of Prussia, the Prince of Mecklenburg, with whom the Empress was accused by Court gossip of having

a late flirtation. The affair was harmless enough, apparently, for Napoleon had taken no notice of it until he thought it advisable to silence the malicious tongues at Court by warning Josephine not to encourage the Prince's attentions to her. Information, however, followed Napoleon to Italy, probably from Fouché, that the Prince was continuing his pursuit and that the Empress had been unwise enough to include him in a party which she took *incognito* to one of the smaller theatres of Paris at which Napoleon objected to her presence.¹ Consequently he wrote to reprimand her rather severely on her indiscretion. It was not because he did not wish her to be gay, for he wrote on

¹ He had already written to her from Osterode on March 17, 1807: "You must not go to small boxes at small theatres. It does not become your rank. You must only go to the four principal theatres and always to the principal box. Live as you used to when I was in Paris." With regard to Josephine's affair with this young Prince it may be noted that Mme. de Rémusat ("Mémoires," iii. 257) claims that Josephine said to her in 1810, when the Austrian marriage was on foot, that if she too wished to marry again the Emperor would not look on the idea with an unfavourable eye. "He proposed to me himself, at the time of the divorce, that I should take as husband the Prince of Mecklenburg-Schwerin—you remember that handsome young man who paid me such attentions at Fontainebleau, and then in Paris at the Tuileries. The Emperor was jealous about him. The Prince has since written to him, I believe, to ask for my hand."

November 30 from Venice : " It pleases me to hear that you are amusing yourself in Paris." But he wished her to preserve her dignity. The suggestion that he was not sorry to be able to find something to reproach her with seems unnecessary. It was Napoleon's wont to keep as strict an eye as possible, during his absence, on the doings of all his family. Nor is it likely that, if he were looking round for pretexts for a divorce, he would have written to Fouché, as he did from Venice, complaining that he was again discussing the question in spite of the orders which he had received. " I can only repeat to you that your duty is to follow my opinion and not to proceed according to your whim." He further wrote on December 6 to Maret, saying : " I observe with pain, from your reports, that people still continue to discuss subjects which must distress the Empress and are unseemly from all points of view."

CHAPTER XXV

A LOSING FIGHT

THE Emperor had told his wife, when setting out for Italy, that he would come back to Paris early in December, but it was January 1 when he actually returned. Josephine, however, had the satisfaction of hearing that Napoleon had confirmed her son Eugène as heir presumptive to the Italian crown and had given him a new title of the Prince of Venice, while her granddaughter Josephine was Princess of Bologna. Divorce seemed no nearer and no farther than when they parted in the middle of the previous November. In the midst of the gaieties—and the opening months of 1808 were very gay—Talleyrand, Fouché, and others were constantly urging the Emperor toward the point when he must part with Josephine. Still he remained undecided, and unable to disguise his indecision. One evening, early in March,

to the despair of his advisers, he seemed to turn back to Josephine with a fresh access of tenderness. He had dined with her as usual, and there was to be a reception afterwards. He was not feeling well, and when the Empress came to him he caught her in his arms, crushing her dress, sobbing and crying: "My poor Josephine! No, I can never leave you." As he grew worse, Josephine made him promise to go to bed instead of appearing at the reception, which he agreed to do if she would come to him afterwards. They passed a very agitated night, Napoleon continually repeating that "they" were surrounding him, tormenting him, and making him unhappy. It was not until morning that he had recovered his equanimity. As the Diplomatic Body and other distinguished foreigners were at the reception, the Emperor's absence excited much comment, and no doubt "they" of whom Napoleon muttered knew all about the scene next morning. "What a devil of a man!" Talleyrand is reported to have said in his anger.¹ "He gives way constantly to his first impulse and doesn't know what he wants to do. Let him make up his

¹ Mme. de Rémusat, "Mémoires," iii. 312.

mind, and not leave us to be the mere sport of his words, not knowing really on what footing we are with him ! ”

Another journey from Paris came opportunely to distract Napoleon's thoughts awhile from the subject of divorce. He was preparing to make a new throne for his brother Joseph in Spain, while Naples was to go to Murat. The quarrels in the Spanish Royal family furnished a pretext, Ferdinand, Prince of the Asturias, having fallen out with his father, mother, and their favourite Godoy. Napoleon sent Murat with an army to Madrid and summoned Charles IV. (who had already abdicated) to meet him at Bayonne—the scene of “the turning-point in Napoleon's career,” as a recent critic has called it. Josephine was left to follow him from Paris at a few days' interval, but was to break her journey at Bordeaux. Here she stayed a month, making herself affable to all and distributing presents with a generous hand—but of course at the Emperor's command and at his expense. It was at Bordeaux that news reached her of the birth of Hortense's third son, the child who was destined afterwards to be known as the Emperor Napoleon III. Her

letter to Hortense, written on April 23, 1808, begins in a jubilant tone.

“I am at the summit of joy, my dear Hortense,” she writes. “The news of your successful delivery was brought me yesterday by M. de Villeneuve. I could feel my heart beat as he entered. But I was in hopes that he had only a happy event to announce, and my presentiment was not wrong. I have just received a second letter from the Grand Chancellor, who assures me that you are doing well, and the child also. I know that Napoleon is consoled at not having a sister and that he already loves his brother very much. Kiss them both for me.”

Two days later Josephine wrote again from Bordeaux, saying that the Emperor had ordered her to join him at Bayonne. “You can imagine,” she said, “that it is a great happiness for me not to be away from the Emperor; so I am off to-morrow very early.” Napoleon awaited her at Marrac, a château outside Bayonne, where with great difficulty were bestowed not only the French Court, but also Charles of Spain and his Queen, Ferdinand, Godoy, and their followers. With the lack of accommoda-

tion and the quarrels of the Spanish family, the visit to Marrac must have been very uncomfortable. But Josephine had the satisfaction of finding Napoleon in a most loving mood toward her. He spent all his leisure time with her and exhibited all his usual signs of good-humour ; as when one day out on the beach, undeterred by the presence of the escort, he chased her over the sands and pushed her into the water, or when, another day, he picked up her shoes, which dropped off her feet as she got into her carriage, and flung them away, in great amusement at the idea that she would have to go home without any.

When he had, as he thought, settled the affairs of Spain by forcibly buying out the weak-kneed Bourbons and establishing a constitutional monarchy, of which Joseph Bonaparte was to be the head, Napoleon started homeward again in the company of Josephine. It was intended that they should travel together to Toulouse, whence the Emperor was to go to Bordeaux and Josephine to the waters of Baréges. Scarcely had they separated at Toulouse, however, when an urgent message followed Josephine from the Emperor, ordering

her to join him again at Bordeaux. News had reached him of the revolt of Spain against King Joseph which culminated in the surrounding of Dupont in the Sierra Morena, the capitulation of an army of twenty thousand men, and the flight of Joseph from Madrid. Napoleon saw the necessity of a personal advance into the Peninsula. In order to do this he must secure himself on the eastern frontier, which necessitated a return to Paris. Josephine must forgo her usual course of waters and accompany him back to the Tuileries.

Although she was thus brought back to Paris, it was not intended that Josephine should play any part in the schemes of her husband. She was not taken to see the "parterre of kings" which witnessed the meeting of the Emperor and the Tsar at Erfurt at the end of September. Her presence at Erfurt was not desired, seeing that Napoleon not only purchased there Alexander's consent to his subjugation of Spain, but also, according to Talleyrand, broached the subject of a marriage with one of Alexander's sisters. "This life of agitation wearies me," he told the Tsar. "I need rest and look forward to nothing so much

as the moment when I can without anxiety seek the joys of domestic life, which appeals to all my tastes. But this happiness is not for me. What domesticity is there without children? And can I have any? My wife is ten years older than I am. I must ask your pardon. It is perhaps ridiculous of me to tell you all this, but I am yielding to the impulse of my heart which finds pleasure in opening itself out to you." On the night of the same day, Napoleon spoke to Talleyrand at considerable length on the subject of the divorce, which was necessary for the peace of France. "The dynasty must be founded by me," he said. "I can only found one by allying myself to a princess belonging to one of the great ruling families of Europe." Talleyrand was therefore to speak to the Russian Foreign Minister on the subject of a match between Napoleon and one of the Tsar's sisters. "Arguments will not fail you," added the Emperor, "for I know that you are an advocate of this divorce, and I warn you that the Empress Josephine thinks you are, too."¹

It would not have been at all convenient

¹ Talleyrand, "Mémoires," i. 447-8.

had Josephine been at Erfurt and had, by any chance, rumours of Napoleon's two speeches reported by Talleyrand come to her ears. Scenes would have been inevitable; but her absence made matters easier. Nor was she suffered to see much of her husband on his return from Erfurt. He stopped but a few days in Paris and left again at the beginning of November for Spain. Josephine clung in vain to him as he went, and was with difficulty prevented from getting into the carriage which bore him south. There was, however, no repetition of her success in September 1806, when she accompanied him to Mayence. On this occasion he was firm, and no tears could move him. After Erfurt his indecision may be said to have vanished, in spite of his quite genuine sorrow when the time came for putting his determination into action. Josephine must be replaced by some one else. His advisers and circumstances combined to drive him to this view. Such a student of French history as Napoleon could not lack a precedent, when once his mind was made up. In the Third Dynasty alone he had the cases of Louis VII., Philippe II., Louis XII., and Henri IV., who

had all repudiated their wives on the ground of barrenness. It only remained to find the discarded one's successor. There was the Grand Duchess Catherine of Russia, sister of an Emperor. Dared her brother refuse her to his ally? For the present Napoleon could not wait for an answer to this question, since he had other matters to look after. He put the affair in the treacherous hands of Talleyrand and started for the west.

Napoleon reached Spain in the first week in November and remained there over the New Year, when he was called back by a threat on his eastern frontier against which he had not guarded. Writing to Josephine on January 9, 1809, in answer to her letter of December 31, he said: "I see, *mon amie*, that you are melancholy and that your anxiety is very black. Austria will not make war against me. If she does, I have 150,000 men in Germany and as many on the Rhine, and 400,000 Germans to meet her. Russia will not separate from me. They are mad in Paris. All is going well." The majority of his letters on the Spanish campaign are very curt; but this one concludes in an affectionate strain:

“I shall be back in Paris as soon as I think it expedient. I warn you to beware of apparitions. One fine day, at two in the morning. . . . But good-bye, my dear. I am well, and am always yours.—NAPOLEON.”

In spite of his confident tone, Napoleon very soon found it expedient to be back in Paris to meet Austria's challenge. Matters were going anything but well in the capital. There were rumours of a plot to provide for the event of his death by putting forward as his successor Murat, now King of Naples after Joseph's promotion to Spain. Fouché was in the conspiracy, and, of course, the ambitious Caroline, who was a warm supporter, if not the instigator of her husband's pretensions. The same plotters were Josephine's chief enemies, however friendly in the past, for different reasons, both Murat and Fouché had been to her. She was perfectly aware of their sentiments. “You have no notion of the intrigues being woven against me,” she said to Girardin, who returned from Spain soon after the Emperor, and proceeded to tell him how her foes had concocted a story that it was intended to pass off as hers a child of

the Emperor by another woman.¹ Napoleon's irritation at the intrigues no doubt made him more sympathetic with his wife. But in any case he had no more time to devote to the question of divorce now than he had when he set out for Spain. On April 9 the Austrians violated the territory of his ally Bavaria, and four days later he started for the Rhine.

Once more the Empress accompanied him to Strasbourg, as in 1805. There he took leave of her, bidding her make a stay of some length. Probably this was again in answer to her request, since the atmosphere of Paris in his absence was more than ever distasteful to her now. This second Strasbourg visit was uneventful. Only one interesting letter from Josephine to her daughter belongs to this period. Hortense had gone in May to take the waters at Baden, bringing with her both her sons. She had omitted to ask the Emperor's consent

¹ Girardin, "Journal," ii. 320. It may be noted that the Russian Ambassador at Paris had in the March of the previous year communicated to St. Petersburg a tale that Napoleon had threatened Josephine to make her adopt his illegitimate sons (one by Mme. Walewska, the other by Mlle. Denuelle), and that she had at once consented. There is no corroboration of Count Tolstoy's tale.

before leaving France, and he wrote to her, reprimanding her and ordering her to send the children to the Empress at once. "This is the first time that I have had occasion to be angry with you," he wrote, "but you should never dispose of my nephews without my permission ; you must know the bad effect which this produces." This letter, signed "Your affectionate father Napoleon," he addressed to her, care of Josephine. The latter writes to her daughter as follows :

"I send you, dear Hortense, a letter from the Emperor to you. I was so troubled at not getting anything from him that I opened this. I see with pain that he is upset at your visit to Baden. I urge you to write to him at once that you had anticipated his wish and that your children are with me, that you only had them with you a few days, to see them and give them a change of air. . . ."

It must not be supposed Josephine is here recommending her daughter to deceive the Emperor, for she says at the end of the letter : "Your children have arrived in good health." The document is only quoted as another example of the intense anxiety of Josephine

to avoid any possible offence to the Emperor from her own family.

In early June Josephine went to Plombières, her favourite waters, to judge by the number of visits which she paid to them. Here she was joined by Hortense, and both together received news from Napoleon of his successes at Ebersdorf and Wagram, and of the armistice of Znaim. It is worthy of note that the language of Napoleon's notes of this period, brief though they still are, is more tender than for some years. "Good-bye, *mon amie*," he writes on June 19, "you know my feelings for Josephine ; they are unchangeable." Two letters written from Schönbrunn in August and one in September, after Josephine had gone from Plombières to Malmaison, are still more remarkable. "I have heard," he writes on August 26, "that you are fat, fresh, and looking very well. I assure you that Vienna is not an amusing town. I should much like to be back already in Paris." On the 31st he says : "I have received no letters from you for several days. The pleasures of Malmaison, the beautiful hothouses, the fine gardens cause the absent to be forgotten. That is the

way with you all, they say." Finally on September 25: "I have received your letter. Don't be too sure. I warn you to look after yourself well at nights. For one night very soon you will hear a great noise."

Now although Napoleon had not yet formed any plan to ally himself with an Austrian Archduchess, he had, on the other hand, definitely attempted to get the Tsar's consent to give him his sister, the Grand Duchess Catherine. Relying on some vague remarks of Alexander at Erfurt, he had commissioned Talleyrand and Caulaincourt to put the matter through for him. But he had not reckoned with Talleyrand's disloyalty nor the hate of the Russian Empress Dowager, to whom Napoleon was "the sanguinary tyrant who governs Europe with his sceptre of iron." To save her daughter from him she was ready to marry Catherine even to Prince George of Oldenburg, whose ugly spotted face, mean figure, and stammering speech were not even counterbalanced by a fortune or indeed anything but his mere title. In the Empress Marie, Napoleon met more than his match. There was no repetition of his victory over the Queen of Bavaria. The Oldenburg

marriage removed Catherine from his grasp and, the Grand Duchess Anne being too young, the Russian matrimonial alliance scheme faded away. For the present, however, the Emperor was unprepared for this defeat. He believed in the power of his influence over Alexander and in the possibility of winning his sister's hand. He had, therefore, no doubt in his mind with regard to what he must do with Josephine. Must his letters be read as tokens of his uneasy conscience toward her? The story of his return to France after the peace with Austria shows how ill at ease he was. He wrote from Munich on October 21 that he was on the point of starting and that he would be at Fontainebleau on the 26th or 27th; she might meet him with some of her ladies. He travelled with great speed, arrived at 9 o'clock on the morning of the 26th, and found no one waiting to receive him except the Grand Marshal, Duroc. He sent off a message to Saint-Cloud, where the Empress was, and then proceeded to look over some rearrangements of the rooms at Fontainebleau which he had ordered by letter while still in Austria. One of these was, significantly, the building of a wall which cut off direct com-

munication between his apartments and the Empress's. After inspecting the alterations Napoleon walked about nervously, continually pulling out his watch and exhibiting signs of bad temper. Still Josephine did not come. But in her stead arrived the Grand Chancellor Cambacérès and the Minister of Police, both of whom began to talk to him about the Imperial succession and the public anxiety at the want of an heir. "There is not a single marshal," said Fouché, "who is not considering how to dispose of your estate if we have the misfortune to lose you. It is a case of Alexander's lieutenants eager for their kingdoms." Such a view coincided only too closely with Napoleon's own. He dismissed his Ministers and resumed his impatient wait for the absent Empress.

About 5 o'clock the sound of a carriage brought him to the door; but it was only a messenger to say that the Empress was following. Napoleon hastened up to his library and began to write. At six a second carriage arrived. This time he contented himself with ringing to ask who had come. The Empress, he was told. "Very well!" he said, and went on with his work. Josephine, having inquired when the

Emperor had reached Fontainebleau, hastened up the stairs and entered the room. Napoleon looked up and, saying, "Ah, here you are, madame! That is good, for I was about to start for Saint-Cloud," pretended to resume his writing. Still standing near the door, the Empress, as might be expected, began to weep. This was the argument which her husband could not resist. He rose and took her in his arms. Reconciliation soon followed; Napoleon apologised for his severity—and perhaps Josephine for her delay, which was at least unintentional. Dinner was served late at Fontainebleau that night. Josephine was resplendent in a new dress and a wreath of blue flowers, and Napoleon contented himself with pointing out that her toilet had taken an hour and a half. Two more Ministers had just arrived, and Josephine avoided the embarrassment of a *tête-à-tête* meal by reminding the Emperor that they could not yet have dined. For the remainder of the evening he showed himself in a most amiable mood.

Josephine, however, was not to be deceived by temporary amiability. There was an air of constraint during the whole fortnight's sojourn

at Fontainebleau. The built-up wall was a symbol which she did not fail to appreciate. Bausset, the palace prefect, could give her no satisfactory account of its construction. "You may be sure that there is some mystery attached to it," she replied ; but the mystery was not one which she could not guess. The situation would have been plain to a woman of much less intelligence than she possessed.

Paris was full of gossip about the divorce when the Court returned. Nor did Napoleon avoid the subject. Once more he approached Josephine in the hope of persuading her to take the initiative and ask him to sacrifice her for the good of the dynasty and of France. Once more she refused. It was not the throne which she cared about losing, she assured him through her sobs, but himself. According to Girardin, he only answered : "Do not try to move me. I still love you, but in politics it is a case of head, not heart. I will give you five millions a year and a principality with Rome as its capital." "Do you know," he added, "that this divorce will be an event in my life ? What a scene for a tragedy !"

So dramatists have thought since Napoleon's

time. But Napoleon's remark was not a mere cynical appreciation of the situation. If there is anything certain about his actual sentiments, it is that his words "I still love you" were true. He had loved her with a love that at all periods exceeded her love for him, and that love still remained, though it no longer obscured his reason. It is not likely that history will ever forgive him for allowing reason to overcome his love to such an extent as to consent to put away the wife of fourteen years. Nevertheless, his action was a sacrifice of his affections to his duty toward the State. It is easy to condemn it as heartless or as actuated by ambition ; but there is nothing to be gained, except in economy of thought, by the use of these labels. But for the fantastic connection which was imagined between the "fortune" of Napoleon and his association with Josephine, we should probably have heard very much less in condemnation of his repudiation of his wife for reasons of State.

As the certainty of a speedy divorce grew, Josephine cannot be said to have acted circumspectly. Nothing, perhaps, could now have persuaded the Emperor to modify his plans ; but attention to his wishes might at least have

delayed matters. Josephine, however, famed for her tact in many things, was in others singularly tactless. An incident which occurred between the return from Fontainebleau and the declaration of the divorce showed how little she could control her follies when everything showed that it was imperative to do so. It is related by the Duchesse d'Abrantès,¹ and the account is therefore, it is hardly necessary to say, not unduly kind to Josephine.

Napoleon had arranged a hunt near Fontainebleau, leaving Josephine at the Tuileries. Rain came on heavily and, sport being poor, he decided to give up and return to Paris. It was evening when he got back, and he entered the Palace unannounced. Going straight up to the Empress's apartments, he found her seated at a table, with a wardrobe-dealer on one side of her and on the other a young German, who had spread out before him a pack of cards, from which he was telling fortunes. Now he had given strict orders that no wardrobe-dealers or stray merchants of finery should be allowed within the Palace ; and the woman now present was one whom he had already had ejected.

¹ " Histoire des Salons de Paris," iii. 390 ff.

Fortune-tellers were still more severely banned by him. This German, who had made a sensation lately among the foolish ladies of Paris, had attracted his attention so much as to make him say to Josephine : “ You have spoken to me of a certain Hermann. I forbid you to see him or bring him to the Palace. I have had inquiries made about him, and he is a suspicious character.” Napoleon might have guessed the result of this command. But the sight of the two forbidden visitors together moved him to violent anger.

“ How can you disobey my orders like this ? ” he cried furiously. “ How is it that you are in the company of such people ? ”

Totally unprepared for such a scene, Josephine was at her wits' end. The dealer fled for refuge to the window-curtains, while the fortune-teller paused to think of his best professional attitude. At last Josephine stammered :

“ It was Madame Letizia who recommended her.”

“ And this man ? What is he doing in the Empress's room ? ”

“ She brought him with her.”

Hermann now intervened, expressing his sur-

prise if his life or liberty should be in danger in the Palace of the Emperor of the French. Moreover, would it not be better for the Emperor to consult the Fates rather than defy them ?

Napoleon could scarcely control his voice to demand : “ Who are you ? And what are you doing in Paris ? ”

“ You see what I am doing. As for what I am—how can I say ? Who among us knows who he is ? ”

With one outraged glance at the three, Napoleon rushed from the room, banging the door loudly behind him. Summoning Duroc, he ordered him to have both visitors turned out of the Palace at once. Early next morning he went to the house which Madame Mère occupied in Paris and asked to see her. With him he took Duroc. While Napoleon talked with his mother, the Grand Marshal imparted the news to Mme. Junot, who was then a lady in attendance on Madame Mère. According to the memoir-writer, he said to her :

“ There is a storm in the air. The question of divorce is more to the front than ever. The Empress, who has never understood her true position, lacks even the second sight which

comes to the dying at their last hour. . . . It is nearly all over," he continued. "The Emperor's resolution has wavered during these last few days, but the Empress's stupidity has ruined everything. And further, since his return to Paris, he has received such a large number of complaints from tradespeople and shopkeepers to whom the Empress has not paid what she owes, that he is exasperated."

Duroc went on to tell the lady-in-waiting the story of the previous night. Meanwhile the Emperor was discovering how Josephine had attempted to deceive him. Mme. Letizia had already received very early in the morning an urgent private message from her daughter-in-law, beseeching her, in case the Emperor should question her about a certain dealer in clothes, to say that she had recommended her to the Palace. The old lady was prepared to do this, to prevent a quarrel over what seemed a petty affair. But when Napoleon began to speak of the suspected German spy she broke down and betrayed Josephine's letter. The Emperor left after an hour's talk, very pale and with signs of tears about his eyes. As for Madame Mère, she took Mme. Junot into her confidence and

said : “ I hope that the Emperor will have the courage this time to take the step which not only France but all Europe awaits with anxiety. His divorce is a necessary act.”

The whole story might not be worth repeating—so common were Josephine’s disobediences of this sort to her husband’s orders—but for the fact that the incident about which it centres had apparently some considerable effect upon Napoleon’s last waverings in the matter of the divorce. Josephine could hardly have made a more unfortunate mistake (in a trivial way) than by trying to involve Madame Mère in her deceit. She was not, however, deterred from appealing again to her mother-in-law, through the medium of their respective ladies, Mmes. de Rémusat and Junot, to intervene on her behalf with Napoleon. She would make any promise which the Emperor might ask of her. Madame Mère promised to use her influence. But of course it was too late ; and it was not for a matter of bringing clothes-dealers and fortune-tellers into the Tuileries that Napoleon was putting away his wife. No promise of amendment of her ways could bring Josephine a child to inherit the throne of France.

Little more than two weeks after the return from Fontainebleau to the Tuileries came the last great series of ceremonies at which Joséphine was present as Empress. December 2 was the fifth anniversary of the Coronation at Notre-Dame. It was also the fourth anniversary of Austerlitz. There was gathered together in Paris in readiness to celebrate the day a crowd of kings, queens, princes, and princesses of the Imperial family and from the vassal States of Germany. Napoleon spared no pains to entertain his visitors with an unceasing series of fêtes. Every one was to be "gay and content," to use his own favourite expression. Unfortunately neither he nor the Empress was able to maintain the effort. Thoughts of the now definitely arranged separation could not be chased away. The abundant reminiscences of the Duchesse d'Abrantès again put the scene before us as she describes the entertainment at the Tuileries on Thursday, November 30. All the week the Empress had been unusually silent. This night the dinner was most mournful. Her eyes were red with weeping and her head was lowered in a vain attempt to conceal them. No one ate or said much. The Emperor

led the way quickly out of the dining-room, the Empress and the others following him. When the coffee had been handed round in the *salon*, Josephine summoned up courage to speak and, beginning to weep again, asked him why he wished to leave her. "Are we not happy?" "Happy?" Napoleon answered. "Happy? Why, the lowest clerk of one of my Ministers is happier than I! Happy? Are you mocking me? To be happy one does not want to be tortured by your mad jealousy as I am. Every time I speak at a reception to a charming or pretty woman, I am sure to have most terrible storms in private. Happy? Yes, I have been." Perhaps he would have remained so, he continued, had not jealousy and anger come to drive away happiness and peace, until he listened to the voice of his people asking for a guarantee for their future and realised that he was sacrificing great interests to a vain ideal.

"So all is over, then?" asked Josephine.

"I had to secure the happiness of my people, I repeat. Why did you force me yourself to see other interests before yours? Believe me, I am suffering more than you perhaps, for it is my hand that is hurting you."

Then followed the remarkable scene described by the Palace prefect Bausset, which turns the whole tragedy of the situation into a comedy. Bausset was sitting in a chair outside the *salon* door, watching the dining-room being cleared by the servants. Suddenly through the door came the sound of sobs and piercing cries. Napoleon came to the door and told him to come in. The Empress was lying on the floor, crying out, "No, I can never survive it!" and lamenting bitterly. "Are you strong enough," asked Napoleon, "to lift Josephine and to carry her up the inner staircase to her room to be attended to?" Bausset, a large, stout man, stooped down and put one arm round the Empress's waist, another under her knees. Napoleon, holding a candle in his hand, went across to the door leading to the staircase and opened it. Josephine, apparently in a dead faint, lay without moving in Bausset's arms. When the staircase was reached, the prefect saw that it was too narrow for him to attempt to go up it with his burden in her present position. He must have assistance. Napoleon therefore called to the watchman who always sat at his study door, handed him the candle,

and told him to go on ahead. Then he relieved Bausset of the Empress's legs, leaving him to pass his arms under her armpits and to go up the stairs backwards. Now Bausset's sword got between his legs and almost threw them all downstairs. Swinging it out of the way, he struck the Empress accidentally on the shoulder with the hilt. Suddenly he heard her voice whispering to him softly: "Take care, M. de Bausset, you are hurting me with your sword; and you are holding me too tight." She resumed her faint, while Bausset lifted her up higher and put his arms again around her waist, the Emperor still holding on to her legs. At length the top of the stairs was reached and Josephine was laid on her bed. A violent ring at the bell brought her waiting-women to her. Dr. Corvisart was summoned, and Hortense. As Napoleon left, he told Bausset the cause of the trouble. He was very much agitated, and added, in broken accents: "The interests of France and of my dynasty put a great strain upon my heart. This divorce has become an absolute duty for me. I am all the more upset by the scene which Josephine has made because for three days she must have

known, through Hortense; the unhappy necessity which condemns me to separation from her. I pity her with all my soul. I thought she had more character, and I was not prepared for the outburst of her grief."

There seems no reason to reject the words attributed to Napoleon by Bausset.¹ If they are correctly reported, he can only have announced his definite decision—that is to say, that he had fixed a date for publicly announcing the divorce—at the beginning of the week; and he must also have made use of Hortense as an intermediary, not having the courage personally to tell his wife. Whether Hortense (to whom the idea of being freed from her husband would have been as welcome as it was terrible to Josephine) was able to persuade her mother that all hope of a reprieve was vain does not appear. But Josephine can scarcely have supposed that any chance remained now of a change of mind on the part of the Emperor. The revelation of Bausset casts the gravest doubt, not on the reality of her grief, however much she exaggerated it, but certainly on the possibility of her having been taken by surprise.

¹ "Mémoires," ii. 2-8.

After receiving from Corvisart an assurance that there was nothing seriously amiss with the Empress, Napoleon had an interview with Hortense, who declared that she and Eugène must retire with their mother, though she promised him never to forget how much she owed to him. Napoleon was aghast at the idea and could not restrain his tears. "What, desert me?" he cried. "You, my children, to whom I have acted as a father? No, no, you will not do that! You will remain. Your children's lot demands this of you." At length his entreaties that she should stay to help him to console and calm her mother, his promises of what he would do for Josephine to make her life happy, prevailed. Before she left him to go to the Empress, Hortense had promised that at least she would not fulfil her threat of leaving the Court.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DIVORCE

THE final scene in the married life of Napoleon and Josephine was about to begin. Amid the gaieties which, during the first ten days of December 1809, marked the anniversary of the Coronation, the preparations for the announcement and actual accomplishment of the divorce went on. Josephine was quite unable to disguise her grief from her guests, and Napoleon himself was on one occasion at least visibly affected in public by her air of utter wretchedness. This was at the entertainment given by the City of Paris on December 3. The Empress arrived first, conducted to the Throne Room of the Hôtel de Ville by the Prefect of the Seine. Her steps were feeble, her eyes swollen with tears, and her effort to restrain her feelings was quite obvious. The Emperor on his entry looked at her anxiously, and found it necessary to halt a few moments

before he could master his emotion. With considerable difficulty they both forced themselves to go through the task of making themselves agreeable to those assembled to meet them.

Josephine was spared any more such ordeals. Retiring to her own rooms in the Tuileries, she left to Madame Mère the duties of hostess for the few remaining days. It was given out that she was indisposed, but no one was ignorant of the real cause of her disappearance from view. All knew that the very hour of the divorce was approaching, and that what had been a matter of common talk for so long was at last to become fact. The Bonapartes assembled in Paris did not disguise their exultation, and from their looks in particular Josephine was glad to escape. Her chief comfort was the expectation of Eugène's arrival. Her son's protection had never failed her yet. Perhaps she had some desperate hope that he might still intervene and prevent the separation from Napoleon. Eugène reached Paris on December 5, having been met by Hortense on his way from Italy. He was therefore acquainted with the facts of the situation and prepared for his

interview with the Emperor. He had long recognised that divorce must come, and had expressed his conviction to his mother as recently as a month ago, when, after hearing from her concerning her conversation with the Emperor after Fouché's interference at Fontainebleau, he had written : " If he [Napoleon] believes that his happiness and that of France require him to have children, let him have no other consideration. He must give you a sufficient dowry and let you live with your Italian children. The Emperor can then make the marriage which his policy and happiness may demand of him."

Such being Eugène's views, he offered no objections to Napoleon's resolution now laid before him, but only insisted that he and his mother should retire permanently to Italy. As he had done with Hortense already, Napoleon protested against the idea of a retirement and insisted that Josephine's sacrifice must bring her honour, not banishment. She should still be Empress, though not reigning Empress, and must ever be his best-loved friend. Eugène finally asked to be present at an interview between his mother and Napoleon. His request

was granted. The presence of Eugène had an excellent effect upon Josephine. She was still weeping, but showed herself dignified and resigned. The welfare of France was too dear to her, she said, that she should refuse to yield to the demand made of her. All she asked was that her children should not be forgotten. "Make Eugène King of Italy," she begged. Eugène broke in with the indignant words: "Mother, let me be left out of the question. Your son does not want a crown which would be, so to speak, the price of your separation. If Your Majesty bows to the Emperor's wishes, it is of you alone that he must think." Napoleon was touched. "That is Eugène's true heart," he said. "He does well to trust to my affection." The scene was over. All had passed in far better manner than could have been expected; but at the Court reception that evening Josephine made no appearance. She had not the strength to preserve in public the brave face which she had put on in the presence of her husband and her son.

Only a few days more remained before Josephine's career as reigning Empress ended. On December 10 Napoleon received a deputa-

tion from the Legislative Body at the Tuileries and informed them that "he and his family were ready to sacrifice, for the sake of France, their dearest affections." Five days later the formal civil act of divorce took place. With regard to the ecclesiastical side, owing to the fact that the Emperor and Pope Pius VII. were no longer on good terms—Pius had excommunicated his former friend and was a prisoner at Savona—there was no question of the help of His Holiness. There was, however, the subservient Cardinal Fesch, Archbishop of Lyons, who had performed the secret religious marriage on the eve of the Coronation; and there were the French clergy, who could be coerced, and were. The details of the civil act were arranged by the Archchancellor Cambacérès, under the direction of the Emperor himself. According to Thiers,¹ whose informant was Cambacérès himself, Napoleon showed his determination to invest the act with ceremonies most affectionate and most honourable for Josephine. "He would have nothing which might look like a repudiation, and agreed to nothing but a simple dissolution of the conjugal bond, based on

¹ "Consulat et Empire," xi. 337.

mutual consent, that consent itself being based on the Empire's interests. It was agreed that after a Family Council, at which the Arch-chancellor should receive the expression of the wishes of the husband and wife, the decree of the Senate, solemnly passed, should pronounce the dissolution of the civil bond, and that by the same resolution the fortune of Josephine should receive a magnificent guarantee."

The Family Council which Napoleon required to witness the ceremony—not to triumph over Josephine's fall, but to honour the great act of renunciation which she shared, however much against her will, with him—was as complete as he could make it. Joseph was not present, being detained in Spain by his kingdom's affairs ; and he was on such terms with his brother at the moment that they hardly exchanged letters. His wife Julie, however, was in Paris. Lucien, of course, was still in disgrace. Elisa was expecting a child, so that she too was absent. But Madame Mère, Louis, Jerome and his wife, the Murats, Pauline, and Caroline were all present, together with Eugène and his sister as representatives of the Beauharnais.

On the night of December 15 the Archchancellor Cambacérès arrived at the Tuileries, accompanied by the Secretary of State for the Imperial Household, Regnaud de Saint-Jean d'Angély, and found the whole Palace illuminated as on a fête-day. Within was the whole Imperial family in full Court dress. At nine o'clock they were gathered in the Throne Room, and the door of the Emperor's room was opened to receive them. Josephine was dressed in a perfectly plain white robe with no jewellery, and though pale she was quite calm; far less agitated, in fact, than either Eugène or Hortense. Round the room were arranged the seats appointed for the family, in due order of precedence. The Emperor, Empress, and Madame Mère had armchairs, the reigning kings and queens chairs, and the others stools. All took their places, and the Emperor, turning to the Archchancellor, began to speak. His speech had been written for him, but departing from the text he substituted his own language, and with emotion spoke of the cost to his heart of the sacrifice which he was making for the welfare of France. "Far from ever having had to complain," he added, with more tender-

ness than truth, "I can, on the contrary, only rejoice over the affection and tenderness of my well-loved spouse. She has graced fifteen years of my life, and the memory of this will remain for ever stamped on my heart. She was crowned by my hand. I desire that she shall keep the rank and title of crowned Empress, but above all that she shall never doubt my feelings and that she shall have me always as her best and dearest friend."

The Empress in her turn took up her speech. Whether she had herself altered the words which had been prepared for her, cannot be said; but the copy from which she read was in her own handwriting and on the paper which she was wont to use.¹ "With the permission of our august and dear spouse," she began, "I declare that, since I have no hope of bearing children who can satisfy the requirements of his policy and the interests of France, it is my pleasure to give him the greatest proof of

¹ M. Masson, who notes this fact, says ("Joséphine Répudiée," 80): "In the declaration which had been prepared for her she too had modified the language. . . . The words which she spoke are apt and noble, and, if it was she who chose them, once more she gave proof of that tact which was one of her virtues and one of her charms."

attachment and devotion which was ever given on earth." But she could read no further. Sobs choked her voice and she handed the paper to Regnauld, who finished the speech for her. "I owe all to his bounty," ran the words, "it was his hand which crowned me, and, seated on this throne, I have received nothing but proofs of affection and love from the French people. I am recognising all this, I believe, in consenting to the dissolution of a marriage which is now an obstacle to the welfare of France and deprives her of the good fortune of being ruled one day by the descendants of a great man plainly raised up by Providence to remove the ill-effects of a terrible Revolution and to set up again the altar, the throne, and the social order. But the dissolution of my marriage will make no change in the sentiments of my heart. The Emperor will always have in me his best friend. I know how much this act, which is made necessary by his policy and by such great interests, has wounded his heart ; but we shall win glory, the two of us, for the sacrifice which we have made on behalf of our country."

Not only Hortense and Eugène (who is said

to have fainted at the end of the ceremony), but even the assembled Bonapartes exhibited emotion at Josephine's surrender of her husband and her throne. None were sorry when the Council finished its sitting with the signature by each member of the report drawn up by Cambacérès and all were able to disperse to their lodgings. Josephine was accompanied from the room by her children, still calmer than they found it possible to be. But the day was not to finish without one more painful scene. The Emperor had retired to his own bedroom and was already in bed, when suddenly Josephine appeared at the door, silent but bearing the signs of the profoundest grief. She came slowly to the bedside, as if walking in her sleep, but having reached it she fell forward, and, throwing her arms about Napoleon, gave vent to bitter laments. The Emperor, by whom this apparition was quite unexpected, attempted in vain to comfort her, with assurances of his everlasting friendship and appeals to her reason and courage. But it was with the greatest difficulty that he restrained his own tears and had the strength to send her away to her own room at the end of an hour. It

was her last night at the Tuileries. The "little Creole" was to sleep no more in the bed of her masters.

Next day it was raining heavily when, at two o'clock, Josephine's carriages awaited her in the courtyard. All her personal belongings had been taken out from her rooms and placed in the vehicles. Her parrot and a family of dogs accompanied her boxes and such furniture as was to go with her. Only the mistress herself was wanted to give the train the signal to start. Josephine still remained in the dismantled rooms, sitting waiting for the Emperor to bid her farewell. His step was heard on the private stair; and, as she rose from her seat, he entered, followed by Méneval, his secretary. Their last interview in the Palace must not be without a witness. Unrestrained, however, by the presence of a third party, the weeping woman threw herself upon Napoleon's breast and clung there. He kissed her several times and then, finding she had fainted, put her into the secretary's arms and hastened out of the room to hide his own emotion from any curious eyes. Josephine, left with Méneval, began to weep again violently and clasped

Méneval by the hands, beseeching him to tell the Emperor not to forget her and to write to her from Trianon, where he was to spend the ten days following her departure from the Tuileries. The distressed secretary promised all she asked, and at length Josephine forced herself to go. She walked out of the rooms which no longer were hers and into the courtyard, got into her carriage, and drove away to Malmaison.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FIRST YEAR OF SEPARATION

JOSEPHINE'S fortune was to have, by Napoleon's desire, "a magnificent guarantee." The Senate's Decree coupled with the announcement of the divorce the settlement on her of two million francs annually from the State Treasury. On the same day Napoleon himself settled on her, from the Crown Treasury, another million. He further presented to her, for the duration of her life, the Elysée Palace, with its furniture and grounds, and renounced any rights which he might have over Malmaison, which was to be entirely at the disposition of herself and her heirs. With regard to her debts, of whose continued existence he was well aware, although he did not know their extent since he had last attempted to get rid of them, he no longer proposed to pay them except out of her own income; but he assisted her to clear them off by advancing the money. He insisted

on a complete list and found they amounted to nearly one million nine hundred thousand francs,¹ while the total number of creditors was one hundred and twenty. Josephine marked on the list those who should be paid in full, and the remainder had their bills cut down as the Emperor decided. Five hundred thousand francs were knocked off the total, and the balance of one million four hundred thousand was paid, on the understanding that seven hundred thousand francs should be stopped out of the million coming to her from the Crown Treasury for each of the next two years. Josephine was therefore solvent again. In order that she should not lapse into debt the Emperor included in the duties of his own financial superintendent the supervision of the Empress's budget. The result of this carefully devised scheme will be seen later.

Josephine retired from her position of reigning Empress with a magnificent income, no liabilities, and a town and a country house, both fully furnished and equipped. From his point

¹ To be precise 1,898,098 francs, of which 587,411 were due to jewellers, 290,733 to the dressmaker Leroy, and 121,013 to one dealer in lace alone (M. Masson, " Joséphine Répudiée," p. 99).

of view, Napoleon had fulfilled his promise of generous treatment, and he was perfectly sincere in his protestation that he intended to keep her always as his best and dearest friend. The question of his financial arrangements must be left to a later chapter. Here we may concern ourselves with the personal relations between Emperor and Empress after the divorce and see how far Napoleon was able to carry out his wishes.

Josephine was accompanied to Malmaison by her son and her daughter, who were, according to the promises which they had given, to help to console and calm their mother in her new situation. The disposition which her Household showed to desert her service was at once checked and all were ordered to continue in their duties until the New Year. The Emperor did not leave it for others to satisfy him as to her state after leaving him, for he drove over to Malmaison on the following day and paid her a visit. They walked in the park together, as of old, but it was noticed that he only shook her hand as he came and went and that he did not kiss her. He was not quite satisfied with her condition. On his return to Trianon he wrote to her at

eight o'clock the same evening the letter which appears in Queen Hortense's collection.¹ "My friend," he began, "I found you to-day weaker than you should have been. You have shown courage, and you must find enough to sustain you. You must not let yourself lapse into a fatal melancholy, you must grow content, and above all look after your health, which is so precious to me. . . . Sleep well, think to yourself that this is what I wish," he said in conclusion, for the letter was despatched to reach her before she went to bed.

As might be imagined, Josephine found it impossible to maintain the "courage" which Napoleon wished to see her display. She grew worse rather than better. Eugène, writing to his wife on the day after the arrival at Malmaison, says: "The Empress is well. Her grief was bitter enough this morning as she went through the places where she lived so long with the Emperor, but her courage got the upper hand, and she is resigned to her new situation. I firmly believe that she will be happier and more tranquil." But when, following the Emperor's example, visitors began

¹ "Letters de Napoléon à Joséphine," No. 95.

to hasten to Malmaison to pay their respects, they found Josephine constantly weeping. Kings, queens, princes, princesses, and all the official and social world of Paris came in pilgrimage to Malmaison, and all alike saw her in tears. It was very natural, and the visitors for the most part were moved to sympathy, both real and politic. But the Emperor, who never omitted to ask all whether they had seen the Empress, was troubled by the universal report. On the 19th, while out shooting, he sent Savary to see her, and a letter followed in the evening, answering one of hers which does not survive :

“ I have your letter, *mon amie*. Savary tells me that you are constantly crying. That is not right. I hope that you have been able to take a walk to-day. I have sent you some of my bag. I will come to see you when you assure me that you are reasonable and that your courage has got the upper hand. Tomorrow I have the Ministers here all day. Farewell, *mon amie*. I, too, am melancholy to-day. I want to hear that you are satisfied and to learn of your self-possession. Sleep well.

“ NAPOLEON.”

Mme. de Rémusat, to whom Josephine confided that "she often imagined herself dead and that all that was left was a vague sensation of existing no longer," did her best to make her mistress take walks, also sent through her husband, who was at Trianon, the very sensible advice that Napoleon should moderate the expression of his regret when he wrote to Josephine, and should rather try to encourage her. Certainly his mention of his own sorrow was not likely to lessen hers. However, his affection prevented him from taking the advice, as some of his subsequent letters show. He apparently found it easier to disguise his feelings when he met Josephine than when he wrote. On the 24th he paid another visit and again did not kiss her, while he took care not to get out of sight of third parties. On Christmas Day he allowed her to come over to dinner with him at Trianon, bringing Hortense; and Eugène, who was also present, declares him to have been "very kind and amiable to her," so that she immediately seemed to grow better.

On the following day Napoleon returned to the Tuileries, while Josephine soon belied Eugène's statement, on his own showing.

“Eugène has told me,” wrote Napoleon on the 27th, “that you were very sad yesterday. That is not right, *mon amie*. It is contrary to what you promised me.” He could not refrain from adding: “I was much annoyed at seeing the Tuileries again. The great Palace seemed very empty to me, and I found myself all alone.” He was anxious even to bring her back to Paris at once, but the Elysée had been borrowed to lodge the Murats, who were not anxious to go home to Naples yet. Eugène had hopes that his mother would accompany him to Milan. She, however, was as eager to be back in Paris as Napoleon seemed to be that she should come. In the meantime she continued to receive her visitors at Malmaison, not less tearful, but gradually more resigned.

If confirmation of her resignation be required, it may be found in her next step, which would be astounding if it were not with the character of Josephine that we are dealing. On the first day of 1810, sixteen days after her departure from the Tuileries, she sent a message to the wife of the former Austrian Ambassador in Paris, that she would much like to see her. Mme. de Metternich arrived at Malmaison next



THE EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE.

From a picture by Prudhon. Photo by Neurdin Frères.



day, and was greeted by Hortense with the words: "You know that we are all Austrians at heart, but you would never guess that my mother has had the courage to advise the Emperor to ask for the hand of your Archduchess." Josephine came in as her daughter spoke and at once began: "I have a scheme which takes up my whole attention and by whose success alone I hope that the sacrifice I have just made will not be entirely wasted. It is that the Emperor should marry your Archduchess. I spoke of it to him yesterday, and he told me that his mind was not yet quite made up; but I believe that it would be if he were sure of being accepted by you."

It was a fact which Josephine was relating to her visitor. Eugène had already approached on the subject Prince Schwarzenberg, the present representative of Austria, with the assurance of his mother's consent. When had Napoleon and Josephine come to an agreement upon this point? It is not known. As late as November 22 Napoleon, disappointed in his hopes of the Grand Duchess Catherine of Russia, had instructed his representative in St. Petersburg, Caulaincourt, to ask for her sister, the Grand

Duchess Anne. Being refused her, on account of her youth, he saw no other Princess so suitable as Marie-Louise of Austria. But Josephine's intervention, in the midst of her inconsolable grief, might well seem surprising to others as well as to Mme. de Metternich. Although Josephine loved match-making, this was assuredly an extraordinary match which she was now helping to make. It is unfortunate that there is no clue to show when the idea first came into her head.

If Napoleon must be married, however, there were obvious advantages for Josephine in appearing as his assistant in bringing about this marriage. She was, if not quite "an Austrian at heart," in Hortense's words, at least on friendly terms with the Austrian Imperial family, especially the Archduke Ferdinand and the Metternichs. Then Marie-Louise was only eighteen, and with a young wife, married purely for State reasons, Napoleon would be likely to require the aid of her own experience to advise him. Might she not even expect that he would be even more glad to have her in Paris after his second marriage than before, when he still dreaded the effect which the sight of her might

have upon his courage? A permanent residence in Paris, with occasional seasons at Malmaison, was the best fate for which she could hope, and the union which she was advocating for her late husband seemed to bring this possibility nearer.

Malmaison, indeed, soon began to pall without the possible distraction of visits to Paris. Josephine was not yet forty-seven and she did not feel the charms of the life of a retired dowager. The Emperor continued to write constantly, but his trips to Malmaison were fewer as the weeks went by. It was in vain that he wrote how he was making her a present of one hundred thousand francs for the extraordinary expenses of her property and that she might "plant what she liked," or promised her other favours.¹ What she wanted and what she wrote to him about was permission to come to the Elysée at once. This is plain from his answers. "I should hear of your presence at the Elysée with pleasure," he wrote on January 30, "and [should be] very glad to see you more often, for you know how much I love you." And again, a few days later: "I have had your

¹ See Queen Hortense's collection, No. 200.

belongings brought to the Elysée. You will always be coming to Paris, but be calm and content, and have complete confidence in me." At last the Palace was ready for her at the beginning of February, and she took up her occupation of it at once, while Eugène, satisfied that his mother had got her way, returned to his wife at Milan.

The realisation of her wish did not equal Josephine's expectations. Napoleon's first note to her at the Elysée begins: "Savary on his arrival gave me your letter. I am pained to see that you are melancholy."¹ Josephine found that, although she was back in Paris, she was no longer in its society as before. "It is perhaps not quite suitable that we should be under the same roof during the first year," the Emperor wrote to her in another letter; and, in fact, at all the great festivities, whither even Hortense might go, there was no place for the divorced Empress. The Court balls and excursions were not for her, the theatres were forbidden if the Royal box was occupied, the Bois was out of bounds if a hunt was on, the papers were forbidden to mention her (although

¹ See Queen Hortense's collection, No. 210.

they disobeyed) because a new Empress was soon starting on her way to Paris and the marriage contract had already been signed. The imagined attractions of the Elysée were all absent. Exile there was worse than at Malmaison, and it can have been with no regret that after a month Josephine quitted Paris and returned to her garden.

The Emperor, however, had no intention of allowing his former wife to be even in the neighbourhood of the capital when Marie-Louise arrived at the end of March. To soften the blow he had decided to present Josephine with a third residence, the old château of Navarre, near Evreux, more than fifty miles across country from Paris. The original building had been erected in the fourteenth century by the Kings of Navarre ; but that which was standing in 1810 dated only from the end of the seventeenth century, and consisted of a huge two-storied square block, topped by a dome upon which one of the Comtes d'Evreux had intended to set up a statue of his uncle, the great Turenne.¹ At its side stood a smaller house. Both alike

¹ See a full and amusing description of Navarre in M. Masson's " Joséphine Répudiée," 148-50.

were dilapidated, draughty, and unfurnished. Apart from its size, Navarre was a most unpromising home. But Napoleon purchased the place on March 8, signed the Letters Patent assigning to it Josephine and her heirs on the 11th, and ordered at once the repairs necessary to make it habitable. On the 12th, having spoken to her previously of his intention of presenting the château to her, he writes :

“ *Mon amie*, I hope that you will have been contented with what I have done for Navarre. You will have seen herein a new proof of my desire to please you.¹ Take possession of Navarre ; you will be able to go thither on March 25 to spend the month of April.”

Josephine showed no great anxiety to set out for Navarre, in spite of the obvious anxiety of the Emperor that she should leave Malmaison before Marie-Louise reached Paris. Accounts of the condition of her new château no doubt influenced her in part, for a letter remains from her to the Departmental Prefect at Evreux, speaking of her desire to hire a house near at

¹ The Letters Patent above mentioned contain a similar phrase : “Wishing to give to the Empress Josephine a new proof of our affection, we have resolved,” etc.

hand, from which she might superintend the repairs. But also Eugène and Augusta were expected from Milan, in order to assist at the Imperial wedding. The stay of her daughter-in-law at Malmaison, commencing on March 20, furnished Josephine with an excuse for neglecting the date appointed by the Emperor for her departure. On the 28th she was still at Malmaison. That same night Marie-Louise reached Compiègne, and Josephine started for Navarre, having risked as far as possible a disobedience of the order which had been given to her.¹

Accompanied by her small Court the supplanted Empress arrived at Evreux on March 29. Her Household had diminished since the divorce. Mme. de la Rochefoucauld had been among the first to leave her and had been transferred to the suite of Marie-Louise, as had Mmes. de Luçay, Lauriston, and Talhouët. Monseigneur de Rohan, her almoner, had also gone, and a number of her other ladies and gentlemen. But Mme. de Rémusat remained, having sided completely with her mistress and

¹ "Can we believe," asks M. Masson ("Joséphine Répudiée" 146) "that such a departure, so much delayed and then so precipitate, was voluntary?"

blaming Napoleon severely for his conduct with regard to the divorce. Mme. d'Arberg, of German princely descent and attached to Josephine since the Coronation, remained also, and was now Lady of Honour and Superintendent of the Household. Others with her were Mme. Ney, the school friend of Hortense; Mme. Audenarde, a Creole and mother of the Emperor's equerry; Mmes. Octave de Ségur, de Turenne, and de Viel-Castel; and Mme. Gazzani, her reader, Napoleon's marked admiration for whom had not lost her Josephine's favour. Not all of these were with her yet, and some were soon to abandon her. But, with newcomers, her suite was sufficiently imposing when she drove into Evreux on the morning of her arrival, to be met by the Prefect and the Mayor, the National Guard, the townspeople and the local clergy, all eager to do honour to their new neighbour on her way to Navarre. She was at once pleased and pained. "The inhabitants have been most attentive," she wrote to her daughter; "but this display of festivity looked a little like complimentary condolences."

Josephine's first sojourn at Navarre lasted a little over six weeks, and those weeks were no

more pleasant to her than she had anticipated. The repairs to the house had been hasty and incomplete. The rooms were vast and chilly, the windows would not close, the roof leaked, and the chimneys smoked. The château's situation in a valley, while giving beautiful views of wooded hills from the windows in the summer, made it very damp for the greater part of the year. In April all was cold and cheerless. The Household was invaded by a spirit of revolt. To the desertions of December 1809, were added several others now. The service of the retired Empress lost all charm for many who had expected to find the honour accompanied by pleasure and ease in the neighbourhood of Paris, or even in Paris itself. Mme. Ney, school friend of Hortense and niece of Mme. Campan, produced a letter from her husband in Spain, written before the departure to Navarre, ordering her to go to Paris. Josephine received the news with dignity and a singular absence of malice. "It would have been sweet to me not to lose you," she told her. . . . "But I know that a woman's first duty is to her husband. Your obedience is proper, and I accept your resignation. Believe in my regrets and

in the friendship which will always attach me to you. I will tell the Emperor and will do my best to support your husband's wish to see you attached to the Empress." Mme. de Turenne, who had not accompanied Joséphine to Navarre, soon followed Mme. Ney's example. Among the men the Comte André de Beaumont and the Comte de Montholon found duties which prevented their immediate presence; and the new almoner, Barral, Archbishop of Tours, was detained in Paris by the marriage festivities.

Nor was there harmony among those who were loyal to their mistress. The ladies quarrelled with Pierlot, the *Intendant*, whom the attraction of Court life had taken away from banking; and when he brought over vanloads of furniture to supply the great deficiencies of the château, seized what they wanted before he could stop them. Jealousy divided the ladies themselves. A smile more from the Empress to one of them produced several long faces, says Mlle. Georgette Ducrest, a niece of Mme. de Genlis, whom Joséphine had lately attached to her suite and who has left a collection of Memoirs of considerable personal interest.

Mlle. Ducrest herself counted several enemies through the presentation of a camellia to her by Josephine.

It cannot be wondered at that a desire to leave Navarre and return to Malmaison seized upon the Empress as well as her Household. The amusements, which consisted chiefly of drives through the damp country by day and sleepy games of backgammon with the seventy-five-year-old Bishop of Evreux at night, could not distract Josephine's thoughts from Malmaison, which at this distance seemed indeed a paradise. The Emperor was approached early in April both about this and about an advance of money for alterations necessary to "make Navarre habitable." He sent Eugène to say that he would consent to both, as appears from Josephine's letter of April 19, in which she thanks him.

"This double favour, Sire," she continues, "goes far to drive away the great anxiety, and even fear, inspired by Your Majesty's long silence. I was afraid of being entirely banished from your remembrance. I see now that I am not. I am therefore less unhappy, and even as happy as it is possible for me to be hence-

forward. I shall go to Malmaison at the end of the month, since Your Majesty sees no objection to this ; but I must tell you, Sire, that I should not have availed myself so soon of the liberty which Your Majesty has granted if the house at Navarre did not call for urgent repairs, for my health's sake and for that of the persons attached to my Household. My idea is to stay at Malmaison for a very short time. I shall soon take my departure to go to the waters ; but during my stay at Malmaison Your Majesty may be sure that I shall live there as if I were a thousand leagues away from Paris. I have made a great sacrifice, Sire, and more every day I appreciate its magnitude. This sacrifice, however, shall be all it ought to be ; it shall be complete on my part. Your Majesty shall not be troubled in the midst of your happiness by any expression of my regrets."

The letter concludes with a request for a proof both to her and to those about her that she still retained " a little place in his memory and a big place in his esteem and friendship." Its tone is not unreasonable, and it surely does not merit either the severe criticisms of some of

the biographers¹ or the reply of Napoleon, who wrote from Compiègne on April 21 complaining of its *mauvais style*. He added, however, that he heard with pleasure that she was going to Malmaison and would be glad to exchange news. This letter was brought by Eugène, who divided his time between Navarre and Compiègne. Josephine's reply merits quotation in full :

“ A thousand, thousand loving thanks for not having forgotten me. My son has just brought me your letter. With what eagerness I read it, and yet I spent plenty of time in doing so, for there was not a word in it which did not make me weep ; but these tears were very sweet ! I have got back my heart entirely, and it will always be as it is now. Certain feelings are life itself and can only finish with life. I should have been in despair if my letter of the 19th had displeased you. I do not remember its exact wording ; but I know how painful was the feeling which dictated it—the sorrow of not hearing from you. I had written to you after

¹ E.g. M. Turquan (“ L’Impératrice Joséphine,” 228), who declares the letter to be totally lacking in dignity. M. Masson calls it a *chef d’œuvre*, but questions the sincerity of her next letter.

my departure from Malmaison ; and since then how many times have I not wished to write to you ! But I knew the reason for your silence, and I feared to importune you by a letter. Yours was a balm to me. Be happy, be as happy as you deserve, it is my whole heart which speaks to you. You have just given me my share of happiness, and a share which I appreciate to the full. Nothing to me can be worth as much as a proof of your remembrance. Farewell, *mon ami*. I thank you as tenderly as I shall always love you.

“ JOSEPHINE.”

In answer to this and another letter, which has not been preserved, Napoleon wrote briefly from Compiègne on April 28, encouraging her to go to the waters and protesting his unchanged feelings toward her. One sentence in the note calls for attention. “ Do not listen to the babble of Paris,” he says ; “ they are idle and far from knowing the truth.” The “ babble ” of which Napoleon speaks seems to comprehend the various rumours that were current while he was at Compiègne, which made out that the new Empress was jealous of Josephine’s prox-

imity and that in consequence Malmaison was to be bought back and Josephine reduced to Duchess of Navarre or exiled to the Duchy of Berg—just the kind of rumours which Parisian idleness might be expected to breed. There was no foundation for them at all in fact. On the contrary, Napoleon showed himself most willing to fall in with Josephine’s desire, expressed through the medium of Eugène, to draw up a programme of her movements for the remainder of 1810 and the spring of 1811. She wished to go first to Malmaison, then at the end of May to whatever waters might be best ; after three months to proceed to the South of France, Rome, Florence, Naples, and Milan ; to spend the winter with Eugène and Augusta in Milan and to return in the spring to Malmaison and Navarre. In order to make Navarre her real headquarters she must have money, however. Napoleon agreed to the programme, and with regard to the waters consented that she should even go to Aix-la-Chapelle if the doctors should think that the best place for her, although he preferred that she should go whither she had not already been with him—for obvious reasons, seeing how easy it was to make her tears flow. He would

make no present of money for Navarre, but would authorise the advance of the six hundred thousand francs left, after payment of her debts, out of the grants from the Crown Treasury for 1810 and 1811, and would permit that the one hundred thousand given for extraordinary expenses at Malmaison should be diverted to Navarre. "I highly approve," he told Eugène, "of her plan of making all her outlay on Navarre."

The reason for Josephine's decision to "make all her outlay on Navarre" is obscure. There was the opportunity, of course, of indulging in those schemes of reconstruction in which she as much as Napoleon himself delighted. And the place had begun to seem better to her than at first. "Residence at Navarre," she wrote to Hortense on May 3, "pleases me much. I am a stranger here to all intrigues." Perhaps, seeing what a creature of caprice she was, we must assume that she had really taken a fancy to Navarre, which the departure of the cold weather rendered more attractive. As she had written in her letter of April 3, "one ought to live at Navarre in the months of May, June, July, and even the beginning of August; it is

then the most enchanting place that there is." This year, however, she did not wish to put the statement to the test, for in the middle of May she brought to an end her first stay at Navarre and returned to Malmaison, then in its spring glory. Speaking of her double hyacinths and tulips imported from Holland, she had once cried: "It is now two years that I have been prevented from seeing them in flower. Bonaparte always summons me to him just at the moment!" In 1810 at least she had her hyacinths and tulips and all the other delights which Malmaison could offer. As for "Bonaparte," she was in hopes of seeing him at the end of the month, in accordance with the promise written by him while touring with the Empress Marie-Louise in Northern France and Belgium.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FIRST YEAR OF SEPARATION (continued)

NAPOLEON'S promised visit to Malmaison took place on May 13, twelve days after his return to Paris. Josephine has left, in a letter written to Hortense next day, the following record of her feelings :

“ You ask me what I am doing. I had an hour of happiness yesterday ; the Emperor came to see me. His presence made me happy, although it renewed my sorrows. Such emotion one would willingly go through often. All the time that he stayed with me I had sufficient courage to keep back the tears which I felt were ready to flow ; but after he was gone I could not keep them back and I became very unhappy. He was kind and amiable to me as usual, and I hope that he read in my heart all the affection and all the devotion for him which fills me.”

Josephine's tears passed away quickly, and the same evening after the Emperor's visit she

was riotously gay. Part of her cheerfulness was no doubt due to the fact that she had gained permission for Hortense to return no more to Holland. After the visit to Compiègne in the company of Napoleon and Marie-Louise and so many of the Imperial family, Hortense had been ordered, sorely against her will, to proceed to Amsterdam to rejoin her husband. Her health was still very bad, and Louis's conduct was worse. Josephine's letters of the first half of May manifest extreme anxiety, and her great desire is that Hortense shall accompany her to the waters to which she is going after leaving Malmaison—Aix-la-Chapelle was her first idea, which she abandoned later in favour of Aix in Savoy (Aix-les-Bains). The Queen's bodily state grew alarming, and the wretched Louis, who could live neither with nor without her, consented that she should leave Amsterdam for Plombières at the end of May. Here she was when she received her mother's letter of May 14, which, after describing the feelings aroused by Napoleon's visit, goes on :

“ I spoke to him about your position and he listened to me with interest. He thinks that you should not return again to Holland, the

King not having behaved as he ought to have done. . . . The Emperor's advice therefore is that you should take the waters for the necessary time and that then you should write to your husband that the advice of the doctors is that you should live in a warm climate for some time, and in consequence you are going to Italy, to your brother's ; as for your son, he will give orders that he is not to leave France. . . . Your son, who is here just now, is very well. He is pink and white." ¹

A few days after sending this news to Hortense, Josephine set out for Aix-les-Bains. She had chosen the place for reasons already explained to her daughter. "My health requires distraction above all, and I hope to find more of that in a place which I have not yet seen and whose situation is picturesque. The waters are especially renowned for the nerves." Travelling under the name of the Comtesse d'Arberg and accompanied only by Mmes. de Rémusat and d'Audenarde, Mlle. de Mackau, MM.

¹ Of the two sons here mentioned, the first is Napoleon-Louis, whose health was too delicate to allow him to live in Holland, and who was accordingly in Paris now. The other, at Malmaison when the letter was written, was Louis-Napoleon, called by his doting grandmother "Oui-Oui."

de Pourtalès and de Turpin-Crissé, she reached Aix before the beginning of the season. Two small houses were hired, and life was very simple and quiet at first. As the news of her arrival spread, however, visitors began to come from Geneva, Chambéry, Grenoble, and Northern Italy, and a small, unceremonious Court formed itself, restrained only by her determination to maintain her incognito. Bathing, excursions, tapestry-making, and reading aloud of the latest novels from Paris passed the days peacefully. Only one incident produced any excitement, when on a trip by water to the ancient abbey of Hautecombe a storm nearly wrecked the boat, causing Napoleon to write from Trianon: "I heard with grief the danger which you ran. For an inhabitant of the Isles of the Ocean to die in a lake would be a catastrophe!"

To judge by the letter which she wrote to Hortense on July 3, Josephine was ill content with her quiet surroundings at Aix. "Let me see you, my dear daughter," she concludes. "Alone, abandoned, far from all my own ones, and in the midst of strangers, judge how melancholy I am and what need I have of

your presence!" This complaint of solitude and abandonment is scarcely borne out by the facts. Before Hortense arrived from Plombières, bringing with her Julie Bonaparte, wife of Joseph, who had been with her there, other family visitors had not been lacking. Eugène and Augusta had been seen on their way back from France to Milan. Josephine's young cousin, Louis Tascher, whose marriage to Amélie von der Leyen, daughter of one of the "mediatised" Princes of the Holy Roman Empire, had lately been carried through by Napoleon at Josephine's request, had come to Aix with his bride, mourning for the terrible death of her mother at the Austrian Ambassador's ball in Paris. Outside the family circle, there had been Charles de Flahault, a young man whose social accomplishments had won him the favour of Josephine and still more of Hortense, whose attachment to him unfortunately went so far as to leave a stain upon her good name. Flahault had preceded the Queen in coming from Plombières and was now attached to Josephine's suite, bringing with him an air of gaiety which always appealed to her heart. Other new friends included Mme. de Souza, formerly the

Comtesse de Flahault, Charles's mother, who afterwards brought up and educated Hortense's illegitimate son. Josephine was, therefore, scarcely so desolate as her letter to her daughter would make out. Still, there can be no doubt that when joined by Hortense—who, in spite of her ill-health and a continual propensity to tears, brought with her to Aix her talent for inventing social diversions and a decorous literary and artistic atmosphere which might be expected to surround Mme. Campan's prize pupil—Josephine found life more than tolerable at Aix. Now she was the centre of an admiring throng, and her Imperial liveries, as she drove about the place, created a gratifying impression. Visits to Geneva gave variety to her day, and she at once startled and pleased the townspeople with her dresses, her suite, and her affability to every one. The life of luxurious calm was one which she would naturally enjoy, and up to the end of August nothing appeared likely to disturb it. Early in September, however, a change occurred. Josephine suddenly set off to Sécheron, a small and dull country place, and took rooms at an hotel, leaving Hortense at Aix. The only explanation which we have

of her conduct is in a letter written to her daughter from Sécheron on September 9 in which occur the words :

“ I have not heard from the Emperor ; but I thought that I ought to prove to him the interest which I have in the Empress’s pregnancy. I have just written to him on the subject. I hope that this proceeding will put him at his ease, and that he will be able to speak to me about it with a confidence as great as my attachment to him.”

Josephine’s letter to Napoleon is not extant, but his reply of September 14, acknowledging its receipt, is in Queen Hortense’s collection. The Empress is *effectivement grosse de quatre mois*, he says. “ She is in good health and is much attached to me.” That there was a connection between Marie-Louise’s condition and Josephine’s restlessness there can hardly be a doubt. While France was rejoicing in the expectation of an heir to Napoleon,¹ Josephine was making a tour round the Lake of Geneva and, after Hortense had left Aix for

¹ “ *La grossesse de l’Impératrice est une joie publique, une espérance nouvelle,*” writes Mme. de Rémusat in the letter mentioned on p. 555.

Fontainebleau by the Emperor's order toward the end of September, she extended her journey to Neufchâtel and Berne. Her great desire now was that the Emperor should allow her to cancel the programme which she herself had submitted to him through Eugène in April and to return at once to Malmaison. The announcement of her successor's pregnancy, so far from causing her to wish to leave France, had precisely the opposite effect. Those who attribute her action to mere contrariety have an easy task in explaining why this was so. For Napoleon's view was certainly that she would do well to go to Milan, as originally arranged. "Go to see your son this winter," he wrote to her on October 1, "come back to the waters at Aix next year, or else stay at Navarre for the spring. I would advise you to go to Navarre at once if I did not fear that you would grow weary there. My opinion is that you could only spend the winter suitably at Milan or Navarre." With this we may compare two letters from Josephine to Hortense, written from Berne on October 12 and 13 respectively :

"If in three days from now I do not receive

letters telling me what to do, I shall think that the Emperor has not approved the request which I made of him. I shall leave for Geneva, . . . from Geneva I shall return to Malmaison ; there at least I shall be in France, and, if all the world deserts me, I shall dwell there alone, conscious of having sacrificed my happiness to make that of others."

"After having reflected well"—this is from the second letter—"I shall follow the Emperor's first idea and shall establish myself at Navarre. It seems to me very unsuitable to go to Italy, especially in the winter. If it was for a visit of one or two months, I should gladly go to see my son ; but to stop there longer is impossible. . . . I confess to you that if I were obliged to remove from France for more than a month I should die of grief. At Navarre at least I shall have the pleasure of seeing you sometimes, and it is so great a happiness for me that I must prefer the place which brings me nearest to my dear daughter. . . . My dear Hortense, if I were to go to Italy, I am sure that several persons attached to me would send in their resignations. It is very melancholy to think of this !"

It is plain from the above letters that while Napoleon wished his former wife to be in Italy, or at most not nearer than Navarre, until Marie-Louise had borne her child, Josephine entirely rejected the Italian scheme (although it was originally hers) and accepted Navarre only if she could not yet obtain Malmaison. Still more light is thrown on the matter by a long letter from Mme. de Rémusat in Paris to Josephine in Switzerland, written apparently in September or early October and included in Queen Hortense's collection.¹ The writer says that she has been unable yet to ask from the Emperor, so much occupied in his own affairs, the audience which Josephine had desired her to ask, but has already seen "some important personages"; and the result of her inquiries and observations is that Josephine's sacrifice still requires completion. Josephine had hoped that the Emperor would be able to bring about a meeting between her and Marie-Louise, especially when the latter should

¹ Letter 220 n. It is undated. M. Masson, from what slight evidence there is, deduces that Josephine received it between October 1 and 15, most probably in the first week of the month.

be reassured by the expectation of a child that her position was secure. "But, madame," says Mme. de Rémusat, "if I am not mistaken in my observations, the time has not come for such a meeting." Marie-Louise, in fact, was jealous, and this feeling could but be increased if Josephine were to return to Paris. Besides, what could Josephine do at the time of the birth of the so much desired child? What would the Emperor do, divided between his duties of the present and his memories of the past? She could not be allowed to remain in Paris. "Malmaison, even Navarre, would be too close to the gossip of an idle and often evil-minded town. Obligated to depart, you would appear to be leaving by command and would lose all the honour due to courageous conduct on your own initiative."

Among those whom Mme. de Rémusat had seen was Duroc, the Grand Marshal. From him she gathered that Josephine ought now to make her last sacrifice and to write to the Emperor announcing her intention.

"By removing an embarrassment from which his affection for you leaves him unable to escape alone you will acquire new claims on his grati-

tude. And beside, apart from the reward which always follows right and reasonable conduct, may you not, with the amiable character which always marks you and your aptitude to please and to make yourself loved, may you not find in the course of a rather more prolonged journey pleasures which you do not foresee at first? At Milan there awaits you the sweet spectacle of a son's merited success. Florence and Rome too would gratify your tastes in a manner which would adorn your temporary retirement. You would encounter at every step in Italy memories which the Emperor would see recalled with no vexation, for to him they are connected with the epoch of his earliest glories."

There is much more in this strain. Mme. de Rémusat very clearly writes under the inspiration of Napoleon, conveyed through Duroc, and no one could see this more clearly than Josephine. She, however, had no intention of being moved by such arguments as were advanced. She had the advantage in the struggle with Napoleon now that he was still too tenderly disposed toward her to give her a positive order to visit Milan, while she had no hesitation in

acting against his mere wishes. Her end was gained by a series of steps. She had arranged in April to spend the winter at Milan. In September she changed her mind on hearing of the approaching event at Paris. Napoleon had already said incautiously in a July letter that he "would be glad to see her in the autumn." Why not then in Paris? He signified his wish that she should go to Milan in view of Marie-Louise's condition, but did not forbid Navarre. Seizing at once on Navarre, Josephine prepared to set out for the place—by way of Malmaison. She wrote to him saying that she was leaving Geneva on November 1 and would spend twenty-four hours at Malmaison before settling down at Navarre. He appears to have offered no objection, although experience should have taught him that expressions of time meant little to Josephine.

Before quitting Geneva, whither she had gone after Berne, she stopped to purchase for herself the little château of Prégny, on the edge of the Lake of Geneva and facing Mont Blanc. Here we find her stopping two years later. She paid for the house and furniture between one hundred and fifty and two hundred

thousand francs, an extravagance which sadly troubles her biographers.

Josephine started on her return journey, as she had announced that she would, on November 1, and arrived at Malmaison to spend her “twenty-four” hours. Napoleon was still at Fontainebleau with the Empress Marie-Louise, which made it easier for the many malcontents who regretted Josephine as soon as they became better acquainted with her successor to flock to Malmaison and pour out their grievances to ears not likely to be closed against them. For Josephine, although not malicious, could hardly help being pleased to hear what people had to say concerning the woman who feared so much the possibility of her presence near the Emperor. She had been left in no doubt what was the attitude of Marie-Louise toward her. Had not even Mme. de Rémusat’s inspired letter to her given her a remarkable instance? The Emperor one day (Mme. de Rémusat had related, on the authority of Duroc), walking with Marie-Louise in the neighbourhood of Malmaison, had offered to show the place to her in Josephine’s absence. “Instantly the Empress’s face was running

with tears. She dared not refuse, but the signs of her grief were so plain that the Emperor made no attempt to insist."

There was, indeed, no uncertainty as to the younger Empress's jealousy of the old, and those who wished to torment her had a ready means of doing so. The date of the following story is uncertain, but it appears to belong to the early days of Marie-Louise in France. Napoleon, entering her room one day suddenly, saw her examining something which she at once endeavoured to conceal. Her agitation and the marks of tears of course attracted his attention. "What is the matter, Louise?" he asked. "What have you got there?" He caught hold of her hand and opening it discovered a miniature of Josephine. Napoleon's good humour turned to wrath. "Who gave you that?" he demanded. Marie-Louise could find no words, but threw herself into his arms sobbing. "You child!" he said. "What is the matter? Why these tears? Tell me, who gave you this portrait? I want to know." The more she wept, the more he insisted, and at last she managed to stammer: "It was not given to me; I found it here on the sofa when

I came in." Although he soothed Marie-Louise, against whose tears, like Josephine's, he was not proof, the Emperor was very angry. The miniature (which represented Josephine not as she was, but as she had been) might well be supposed to have been dropped by him, which it was doubtless the intention of the person who had left it in the new Empress's room should be imagined to be the case.

There was a very distinct danger that there should spring up in the Court two hostile parties, those of Marie-Louise and of Josephine. The latter's stay at Malmaison now threatened to hasten the growth of the split. The feeling was spreading from the courtiers to the servants of the two households. The uniforms of the two Empresses' attendants were very similar, and meetings between the opposing camps in Paris resulted in quarrels which very soon came to Napoleon's ears. The trouble must be stopped. He wrote to Mme. d'Arberg that Josephine must leave for Narvarre as she had promised. His own return to the Tuileries, with Marie-Louise, was fixed for November 15. On the 14th, as Josephine was still at Malmaison, he sent Cambacérès to her to hasten

her departure. She could not go without making the proper preparations, she protested, and promised to leave on the 19th. Unfortunately, her preparations were not quite completed when the 19th arrived, and it was not until the 22nd that she actually reached Navarre, having stretched her "twenty-four hours" into nearly three weeks.

CHAPTER XXIX

JOSEPHINE AND THE KING OF ROME

IN Josephine's absence of six months, her architect had striven to make Navarre at least "habitable" and capable of being warmed if there were only sufficiently big fires. The wetness of the neighbourhood could not be overcome. "You will do well to leave your children in Paris when you come to Navarre," writes Josephine to Hortense in December. "It must be damp weather everywhere, but it is much more so here." The life at the château, therefore, did not differ very materially now from what it had been when the first visit had been paid. The general course of things was very quiet. Josephine would come down from her room shortly before breakfast, which was served at eleven o'clock, with a considerable display alike of plate and of attendance, two footmen standing behind the mistress and one behind every one else at

table. Josephine was scarcely responsible for this, since the Emperor insisted that the ceremonial at Navarre should be kept up on a high level. In the afternoons walks or drives were taken when the rain permitted. In the garden there was little to be seen in the winter of 1810-11, though it was already beginning to be a small imitation of Malmaison. Indoors, where Josephine's taste was principally displayed in her toilet ("very refined and elegant," says Mlle. Ducrest, "but not usually magnificent"), there was little to be done except to use the needle and listen to Mme. Gazzani reading a novel aloud. Dinner, which was on a much more elaborate scale than breakfast, was followed by music, or backgammon with the Bishop of Evreux, or billiards with one of the gentlemen, or cards, Josephine often amusing herself by fortune-telling with their aid. Tea and then bed closed the day. "Peace sometimes takes the place of happiness," Mme. de Rémusat had said of the visit to Aix; and the same might be said of Navarre.

A certain variety was given by the largeness of the Household, reinforced by a number of young girls whom Josephine had attached to

herself, either because they could sing or because they otherwise pleased her. "It is said at Navarre there are more women than men," remarks Napoleon in his letter acknowledging Josephine's New Year's greetings. Stéphanie d'Arenberg, formerly Tascher, had come to live with her kinswoman, but was not a very cheerful companion, for she was subject to fainting-fits and attacks of nerves. It may be gathered from one of Josephine's letters that she herself suffered sometimes from nerves; or was it only from tears? Her eyes were troubling her, she wrote to Hortense. "My doctor says that it comes from having cried; but for some time past I have only cried occasionally. I hope that the quiet life which I lead here, far from intrigues and gossip, will strengthen me, and that my eyes will get well."

Josephine had hoped to have Hortense with her over New Year, 1811, but the Queen's health was too bad to allow her to leave Paris. In her absence Navarre was consoled by a lottery, in which all the prizes were given by the mistress of the house, and all distributed with such singular appropriateness that it was obvious that Josephine had taken the rôle of

chance upon herself ; for the first lot fell to the almoner, Archbishop Barral, who received a ruby and brilliant ring (which he hoped the ladies of the Court would come to kiss more often than his old ring, he said), and no subsequent mistake was made, unless it were that Mme. Gazzani's prize was equal in value to those of the Palace ladies, in whose eyes the fact that the *lectrice* had once attracted Napoleon was no excuse for putting her on the same level as themselves. The jealousies at her Court had not ceased as it grew larger in consequence of the formation of a clique friendly to Josephine, because hostile to Marie-Louise—the Navarre Party, as it came to be called.

The approach of Easter brought a little more excitement into the calm life at the château. On March 19 Josephine gave a ball to the people of Evreux, and on the next day there was a dinner at the Mayor's, to which she was invited with her suite. She sent the suite, but remained at home herself with Mme. d'Arberg. She was expecting to hear of an event which made her too anxious to care about a dinner at Evreux. The time of Marie-Louise's delivery she knew was at hand. Napoleon had written

to her : " I hope to have a son. I will let you know at once." She had already prepared a gift for the messenger who should bring the news ; a diamond pin worth five thousand francs if the child should be a girl, one worth twelve thousand if it should be a boy.

Curiously, by absenting herself from the Mayor's dinner Josephine received the announcement later than if she had accepted the invitation. The sound of the guns and bells at Evreux reached her before the postmaster, who had the news from a courier on his way to Cherbourg, could reach her presence. According to the postmaster's account, when he communicated the intelligence to Josephine he noticed at first a slight frown upon her face. Then, recovering her usual gracious manner, she said to him : " The Emperor cannot doubt the lively interest which I take in an event which crowns his joy. He knows that I cannot separate myself from his destiny, and that his happiness will always make me happy." On the following morning Eugène arrived from the Emperor to bring full details. Josephine sent back her congratulations, and on the 22nd Napoleon wrote, in his own execrable hand,

the note which Queen Hortense's collection reproduces in facsimile :

“ *Mon amie*, I have received your letter. I thank you. My son is big and healthy. I hope that he will do well. He has my chest, my mouth, and my eyes. I hope that he will fulfil his destiny. I am always quite satisfied with Eugène. He has never caused me the slightest sorrow.

“ NAPOLEON.”

Mlle. Ducrest relates that Josephine was intending to give the Imperial page who brought her the letter the pin of twelve thousand francs value, but was persuaded by Eugène that to do so would be to make people think she wished her munificence to be talked about, and she therefore gave the present which she had designed to make in the event of the birth of a girl. Mlle. Ducrest also states that Eugène, to amuse his mother, gave her a description, with the appropriate grimaces, of the scene in Marie-Louise's ante-chamber on the night preceding the birth, when Caroline Murat and Pauline Borghese awaited the event which was to give so much extra importance to the

new sister-in-law whom they loved little more than they had loved her predecessor. The Bonaparte-Beauharnais feud had practically ceased since the divorce, followed by Hortense's separation from Louis. But it had only ceased because Josephine and her brothers and sisters-in-law never met, and there had been no reconciliation. Josephine, therefore, was still likely to enjoy hearing of Caroline's and Pauline's discomfiture, for all her pigeon-like lack of gall.

In his happiness at the advent of his long-desired son, Napoleon did not forget the wife who had failed to present him with an heir. He gave her permission, which she had already intimated through Mme. de Rémusat her wish to obtain, to leave Navarre and come to Malmaison for the spring. She came in April and returned to Navarre in June to spend her birthday—her forty-eighth—in a place where the celebration could not give offence to the other Empress. The hope of meeting Marie-Louise had faded away. Napoleon, if he had ever thought seriously of the idea, had abandoned it in the face of the younger woman's obvious terror; and we hear no more of

Josephine's desire to be brought face to face with her rival.

The people of Evreux, whom Josephine had quite won by her free-handed charities and the gift of money for a theatre, felt no restraint in displaying their gratitude to her. On the morning of June 23 a band of young girls, headed by the Mayor's daughter, arrived at the château and presented to her the good wishes of the town, together with a bust of herself under a canopy of flowers. Delighted with this mark of affection, Josephine kissed the young spokeswoman, invited the whole company to breakfast, and distributed gifts among them all. At night the town was illuminated, but Josephine, who had grown circumspect, it appears, would consent to no official fête in her honour. She spent the evening at home, in the midst of her own Household, who had tricked themselves out as peasants for the occasion and treated her to a poem of adulation set to music, which did not fail to please.

Navarre, indeed, had its compensations, although it still needed reconstruction according to its mistress's ideas. She was contemplating



PRINCE NAPOLEON LOUIS.

From a picture at Versailles. Photo by Neurdin Frères.

large and expensive alterations when she decided to leave it at the beginning of September 1811, and return to Malmaison. Her reasons are given in a letter to her daughter on the 5th of the month. “The approach of autumn,” she wrote, “and the great number of invalids in my Household have made me leave Navarre, my dear Hortense. I have been at Malmaison for two days. My health is fairly good, and to-morrow I shall have the pleasure of embracing your two children.” The charms of the society of Napoleon-Louis and “Oui-Oui” were irresistible to her, and the erratic movements of Hortense, fond mother as she had the reputation of being, gave her the opportunity of enjoying them fully both now and two years later. The younger boy was undoubtedly her darling, although she did no injustice to the other. “Everything about them points to an excellent disposition and a great love for you. The more I see of them, the more I love them.” But it was “Oui-Oui’s” character which especially delighted her, his sayings which she was always repeating. The tales of the Emperor Napoleon III. as a child are well known. One of them perhaps

may be quoted here, in his grandmother's words :

“ Little Oui-Oui is always gracious and loving to me. Two days ago, seeing Mme. de Tascher departing to rejoin her husband at the waters, he said to Mme. de Boucheporn [his governess] : ‘ She must love her husband very much then, as she is leaving grandmamma.’ Do you not think this charming ? ”

Never do we see Josephine in a more lovable mood than when she takes her little grandsons into the hothouses at Malmaison and gives them sugar-canes to suck, buys stocks of toys in preparation for their visit—“ but not sweets ; be at peace, they shall not have any,” she writes to Hortense—tells of their pink-and-white complexions and “ not the slightest illness since they have been here,” or admonishes their mother : “ Keep yourself for them ; you are so necessary to them ! ”¹

It is sad to turn from such a picture to that of Josephine discussing with the ungrateful

¹ Napoleon III. in his fragmentary recollections of his infancy, it may be recalled, says : “ My grandmother spoilt me in the fullest sense of the word, while, on the contrary, my mother, from my tenderest years, devoted herself to correcting my faults and developing my character.”

Bourrienne the misdeeds of Napoleon. The ex-secretary, though disgraced by the Emperor for dishonesty, had been so far forgiven as to be made representative of France at Hamburg. During visits to Paris he used to call at Malmaison, and with Napoleon's approval, he said, "Still, he might have imagined that in my conversations with Josephine in private it was not always praise of him which came from our lips." Elsewhere Bourrienne asserts that Josephine told him that the days when Napoleon came to visit her were days of torture for her, since he did not spare her feelings! With this we may contrast the manner in which Josephine wrote to Hortense about Napoleon's visits. But, unfortunately, as she often showed in the days when she was still reigning Empress, as well as during the Consulate, she was always prompt to pour out to her confidants her most fleeting sentiments, regardless of the impression which their repetition might have.

The visitors to Malmaison included many beside the treacherous ex-secretary. The Navarre Party was flourishing, and the Empress Josephine was now courted quite as much as the Empress Marie-Louise. Her guests at

breakfast were wont to number as many as ten or a dozen, and others continued to come in the afternoon or to dinner. And not merely visitors but tradespeople thronged to Malmaison and helped to distract her mind from her griefs. Bourrienne says that he once complimented her on the happy influence which dress and such things had over her. "Well, my dear friend," she replied, "all this ought to be indifferent to me, but it has become a habit." She might have added "and an occupation," comments Bourrienne, for it was no exaggeration to say that if from Josephine's life are subtracted the times spent on toilet and on tears, the length would have been considerably diminished.¹

But if toilet was an occupation to Josephine, it was also, now as ever, an enormous expense. When the Emperor had settled all her bills up to the end of 1809 he provided, as he thought, against any further lapse into debts. The spending powers of Josephine and the incompetence or dishonesty of the *intendants* of her Household had defeated his intention, and the financial position was growing serious again.² But she did not in consequence contemplate

¹ "Mémoires," ix. 11.

² See p. 636.

any retrenchment. She had come to Malmaison in September with her head full of the extensive alterations which she desired at Navarre. At Malmaison she abandoned the plans for Navarre, but consulted her architect Fontaine with regard to the erection of an entirely new château here. There was no money for the purpose ; but would not Fontaine suggest to the Emperor, when a favourable opportunity arose, that he might buy back from her his gift of the Elysée Palace ? Fontaine did as he was asked. Napoleon welcomed the idea of regaining the Elysée, which he had already been compelled to borrow from Josephine in order to house his Royal visitors on the occasions of the wedding of Marie-Louise and the birth of the King of Rome. He did not, however, see his way to giving her a sum in cash for it. Instead he presented her with the château of Laeken, which she had already visited in May 1807, when she went to meet Hortense after the death of Napoleon-Charles. Since he had purchased it in 1804 Napoleon had expended large sums on Laeken and turned it into a regular Imperial residence, for which its nearness to Brussels fitted it well. The house had been

largely rebuilt and the furniture was new and magnificent. The park which surrounded it was large, and the gardens had been stocked for the visit of Marie-Louise in 1811. The exchange, therefore, was by no means disadvantageous to Josephine ; but, since it was money for which she had asked, not a new home, she was by no means satisfied with her bargain. She did not venture to protest. Napoleon signed the deed making the exchange in February 1812. Josephine appears never to have set foot in Laeken since she became its mistress. Perhaps she was partly influenced by the complaints in her Household, whose outcry was loud at the confiscation of their rooms at the Elysée and who gloomily prophesied that it was the Emperor's intention to make Josephine a prisoner in the Belgian château.

The spring of 1812 found Josephine still at Malmaison. The fatal war with Russia was imminent and Napoleon was preparing to leave Paris to put himself at the head of the Grand Army. Eugène had been summoned by him from Milan to take part in the campaign and had visited his mother at the end of April, bringing with him as usual the at-



NAPOLÉON II.,
King of Rome, Duc de Reichstadt, etc.
From an engraving by Weiss.

mosphere of gaiety which always accompanied him. Napoleon himself, who had not been seen often at Malmaison of late, had also paid a visit and consented at last that she should see the King of Rome.¹ In order to disarm Marie-Louise, it was decided that the meeting should be of an apparently accidental character. In the Bois de Boulogne was a small château called the Pavilion of Holland, formerly Bagatelle, built by the Comte d'Artois in 1783 or 1784. The young King used to drive out thither daily with Mme. de Montesquiou, Imperial governess, and on this occasion Napoleon accompanied them on horseback. Josephine drove over from Malmaison, and the meeting took place.

¹ The majority of contemporary writers, although they are vague, seem to place this meeting, which was also the last interview between Napoleon and Josephine, in the spring of 1812. M. Masson says ("Joséphine Répudiée," 290 n.): "In the absence of positive information, I am inclined to favour the winter of 1812 by the fact that there was then a sort of softening on the part of Marie-Louise; this is, however, a mere induction." Napoleon, however, did not return from Moscow until the third week of December 1812, and he had little time for domestic affairs on his return.

M. Turquan, commenting on Josephine's request to see the little King, says ("L'Impératrice Joséphine," 260): "It would have been more fitting if she had not approached this subject, and especially if she had not asked her former husband to show her the son whom he had by another woman." Why?

On seeing the child, Josephine found it hard to restrain her tears, as she had promised. She embraced him desperately, loaded him with kisses and affectionate words, and could not cease admiring him, until the Emperor, seeing that the promise would not hold good, brought the scene to an end by saying she should see the child again. According to the general opinion, Napoleon and Josephine never saw one another again after this day at Bagatelle. They parted without a "curtain."

It is difficult to see why any of Josephine's critics should take her to task for the interest which she manifested in the son of Napoleon and Marie-Louise. Of course, to such as refuse to admit any real love on her part for Napoleon her request to see the boy must appear inexplicable unless prompted by mere curiosity. But if we believe (as it seems impossible not to believe) that she did bear, in her later life, enduring love of a kind toward the man with whom she had lived so long, her desire to see his son, the crown of her sacrifice, is surely very natural. And as regards her outburst of affection toward him at Bagatelle, it is what we should expect of a woman who always showed

such delight in the young. If children pleased her, how should not the child of Napoleon do so ?

As a matter of fact, she not only was ready to love the King of Rome, but also another son of the Emperor, the little Walewski who was born in Poland in May 1810. Marie Walewska had brought to Paris the fruit of Napoleon's infatuation for her and had yielded to Josephine's pressing invitations to visit Malmaison with her boy. The future Count Colonna Walewski, Minister of Napoleon III., made a conquest of the soft heart of Josephine, who had toys for him as for her own grandsons. The mother, too, was in her good graces and continued to visit Malmaison down to the time of its mistress's death. It was singular, perhaps, that Josephine should display not only no resentment but even a liking for the woman who had, however much against her own will, robbed her of some of the affection of Napoleon. But it was at least characteristic of her to forgive such injuries, for had she not taken into favour Mme. Duchâtel, who had caused her so much anxiety in 1804, and had she not still in her service Mme. Gazzani, who had set the whole Court talking in 1807 ?

CHAPTER XXX

LAST DAYS OF THE EMPIRE

WHILE Napoleon, accompanied by Marie-Louise, went to Dresden to meet his vassals before beginning the march into Russia, Josephine paid a short visit to Hortense and her two children at Saint-Leu. A letter remains in which she expresses her pleasure at the time thus spent. It is dated Malmaison, June 1, 1812, and begins as follows :

“ My sweetest task on arriving here, my dear daughter, is to tell you how enchanted I have been with my stay at Saint-Leu. I regret not having known that your departure would be delayed. I also would have postponed my return in order to be a longer time with you and your children. The few days which I spent with you were for me a season of happiness and have done me much good. All who come to see me find that I have never looked better, and I am not astonished. My health always

depends on the impressions I have received, and all with you were sweet and happy.”

Eugène, she adds, was very anxious that she should go to spend some weeks at Milan with his wife. He had, in fact, already asked her to do so while he was in Paris waiting to receive instructions concerning his part in the campaign against Russia. Only Napoleon's permission was required, and this came in a letter dated from Gubin, June 20. After making the necessary preparations, Josephine was ready to set out from Malmaison when suddenly bad news arrived from Aix-la-Chapelle, where Hortense now was with her children. Napoleon-Louis had caught scarlatina, and his mother was much alarmed. Had not a reassuring letter followed almost immediately, Josephine would have abandoned her Italian trip. “It would be impossible for me to go if the least fear remained in my mind,” she writes on July 13, and on the 15th: “I am glad to think that there is no more ground for fear, and in reliance on this I will delay my journey no longer. I shall go to-morrow, the 16th, and perhaps I shall hear again before I leave.”

Josephine went to meet a new set of grand-

children at Milan, where she arrived on the 28th. Her description of the family to Hortense is so graphic that there need be no excuse for quoting her words :

“ Here I am at last at Milan. The pleasure of seeing Augusta has revived me. Her health is very good, and her pregnancy is far advanced. I am with her at the Villa Bonaparte ; I have Eugène’s rooms. You can imagine all the pleasure it gave me to make the acquaintance of his little family. Your nephew is very strong, an infant Hercules. His sisters are extremely pretty. The elder is a beauty ; she resembles her mother in the height of her forehead. The younger has a lively and clever face ; she will be very pretty.”

Only three days after Josephine’s arrival there was a fourth grandchild, the future Empress Amélie of Brazil. Augusta, writes Josephine the same day, “ is perfectly well, and her daughter is superb, full of strength and health.” On August 4 again she says : “ She is charming, and, so far from being tired after child-birth, I find her more beautiful and fresh than I have ever seen her. Her children are superb ; the eldest girl, especially, is remarkable.” She

was most obviously delighted alike with the family and the mother, of whose "tender love for Eugène she saw constant proofs, which were a great joy to her." Her own health, however, was poor, and she was anxious to visit Aix-les-Bains before returning to Malmaison. But for the presence there of Madame Mère, Pauline, and Cardinal Fesch—the oddly assorted but mutually loyal trio, the austere old mother, her beautiful and immoral daughter, and her scheming priestly half-brother—Josephine would have left Milan for Aix early in August instead of remaining until the end of the month. When she arrived she found Julie, Queen of Spain, with whom she was on good terms, and her sister—once Désirée Clary, the rich Marseilles merchant's daughter whom Joseph Bonaparte had so much desired Napoleon to marry, and who was now, as wife of Bernadotte, Princess Royal of Sweden. Both were very kind to her, she says, and after their departure and the approach of colder weather she left Aix and paid a visit to her own château of Prégny. "I regret that you are not here with me," she writes to Hortense on October 2, a few days after her arrival. 'The weather is very fine.

The views of the Lake and of Mont Blanc are magnificent. It only wants you at Prégny to appreciate with delight the full charm of a quiet life.”

In spite of Hortense's absence, in spite also of the small comfort and deficient furniture of the house, Josephine thoroughly enjoyed her few weeks at Prégny. The Genevans found her interesting, amusing, distracting, if their simplicity was rather upset by the manner of life which she introduced in their midst. She gave dinners and receptions, refused to see no one who came to call upon her nor to go anywhere she was invited. If she could not remember many who claimed acquaintance with her, it made no difference; she had met so many people in her life that she could well be excused for lapses of memory. Her costumes were marvellous. At a ball she appeared in a lace-flounced and silver-embroidered gown of pink crêpe, cut low so as to show to full advantage her necklet of large pearls worth about one hundred thousand francs, while across her forehead, round her neck, and among her hair, dressed *à la Chinoise*, ran bands of silver. Her associates, although they could not imitate

her magnificence, at least spent thought upon their toilets. It was the least they could do. She asked so little of them, except that they should help her to be amused. She made no insistence upon her rank of Empress, and etiquette was banished. She took her place at the card-table with the rest, and there was no hesitation about playing in her presence blind-man's buff and the like foolish games which fifty years later brought unjustly harsh reproach upon the Monday evening entertainments at the Tuileries under Napoleon III. and the Empress Eugénie.

On October 21 the "quiet life" at Prégny came to an end, and Josephine returned to Malmaison, taking with her as a memorial of her visit to Switzerland a shepherd and shepherdess to live in the park and look after her Swiss cattle. She arrived at an exciting time. The madman Malet had escaped from his asylum and by means of forged letters from the Senate had seized Savary, Minister of Police. Before he could be captured with two other conspirators, he had spread the news that Napoleon had died in Russia. Josephine, as appears from a letter to Eugène, reached Paris the day after

his arrest. "If there had been the least danger for the King of Rome and the Empress," she says, "I do not know if I should have done right, but very certainly I should have followed my first impulse and should have gone, with my daughter, to bear them company."

The apparition of Josephine at the reigning Empress's Court, had she "followed her first impulse," would probably have caused intense astonishment; but Hortense at least was already well known there, having been accepted by Marie-Louise with more friendliness than she accorded to any of the Bonaparte family. "I feel an unbounded gratitude to her [Marie-Louise] for the friendship which she shows you," says Josephine in an undated letter from Malmaison to her daughter at this period.

Malet's attempt was fortunately frustrated without much difficulty and the mad conspiracy nipped in the early bud. The report of Napoleon's death, however, had caused a panic which was much increased by the knowledge that treason was about. Still greater would it have been had any one known, except the traitors themselves, how widespread was that treason. Josephine's own Household, little as she was

aware of it, reeked of it. Her preference for the people of the old *régime* had surrounded her with former *émigrés* and *ci-devants*, men and women, many of whom only looked forward to the restoration of the Bourbons, and among them, especially among the women, Talleyrand had his agents, as he had everywhere else.¹ All was steadily preparing for the end which the arch-plotter had in view, and Napoleon's precipitate home-coming to Paris on December 18 was not a moment too soon.

Napoleon's return after the first campaign in which he could not conceal a serious defeat, while it restored confidence to a certain extent, could not banish doubt. Josephine, always a prey to irrational superstitions, noted with alarm the date of New Year's Day, Friday, January 1, 1813. "Have you remarked that the year begins on a Friday and it is 1813?" she asked. "It is a sign of great misfortunes." Her surroundings were not such as to relieve her mind of terrors of this kind. With the Emperor back in Paris, Malmaison ceased to be the fashionable resort. The real Court again

¹ M. Masson, "*Joséphine Répudiée*," 285 ff., goes into this matter in detail.

took the place which in his absence it was in danger of losing through Marie-Louise's failure to please ; and the older Empress was consequently deserted in comparison with her rival. It was not allowed by etiquette that any one should be received by Josephine who had not first been to the Tuileries. The Duchesse de Reggio, Oudinot's second wife, illustrates this in her account of her first visit to Malmaison with her husband. "The graciousness with which the Empress Josephine received me," she says, "surpassed all my expectations. After having made me sit by her on her sofa, she addressed to me the crowd of kind and affectionate questions which put heart into a timid young woman whom one wishes to encourage. She was holding a spray of white camellia, a new product of her magnificent hothouses. She gave it to me with an infinite grace. I took it, much moved, half-rising from my seat, and the Marshal, who followed all with his eyes, told me later that he was satisfied with the way in which this little scene passed. 'Have you been presented?' Josephine asked me ; and I felt that I blushed as I answered, 'Yes, madame.' 'To the Emperor and—the Em-

press?' she went on. And I felt that I blushed more foolishly still as I answered this second question with a second 'Yes, madame.' Soon after the Empress rose and went to find the Marshal, who was engaged in conversation at the end of the room. She had not seen him for two years. He complimented her on her appearance of good health. 'Yes,' she replied with a sweet, resigned air and a melancholy smile, 'that is my compensation for being no longer reigning Empress!''

The Emperor's departure again in April gave visitors to Malmaison greater freedom, but it also drew away from Paris all the men who were to share in his great effort to repair the disaster of the retreat from Moscow. Josephine's chief consolation in this gloomy year was the prolonged stay with her of Hortense's two children. She went to Saint-Leu to fetch them in May, and they were still with her in August. Her letters to Hortense, who was spending the summer at Aix-les-Bains, are full of them and their endearing ways. But she was not spoiling them, she hastened to assure their mother. "Be quite easy about them. Your instructions about their diet and their studies are followed

exactly. When they have worked well during the week, I have them to breakfast and dinner with me on Sunday. What proves that they are well is that every one finds that they have grown." When Hortense returned to take the children to Dieppe, we may be sure that Josephine shed many tears at losing them.

In the vast struggle between Napoleon and all Europe the history of Josephine to a great extent fades from the view. Mentions of her are few and the little which survives of her correspondence is without importance. She lived on at Malmaison in the midst of her diminished Court, her flowers and animals—and her debts. It is singular that the last letter from Napoleon to Josephine which Queen Hortense includes in her collection deals with the subject of her expenditure. The letter was written at 8 a.m. on some Friday in 1813, presumably later than Napoleon's return to France after Leipzig, and runs :

"I send to inquire how you are, for Hortense has told me that you were in bed yesterday. I was angry with you about your debts. I do not wish you to have any ; on the contrary, I hope that you will put by a million every year to

give to your grandchildren when they marry. However, never doubt my friendship for you and give yourself no concern on this point. Farewell, *mon amie*. Tell me that you are well. They say you are getting as stout as a good farmer's wife from Normandy.

“NAPOLEON.”

In the almost total absence of any correspondence to enlighten us, it is impossible to say how far Josephine comprehended the meaning of the struggle of 1813 and how its incidents affected her. A letter remains which she wrote to Hortense on hearing of Louis Bonaparte rallying to the Emperor in November. The Rémusat had dined with her at Malmaison, she tells, and informed her that Louis had written to his brother, saying that he asked nothing better than to be with him at the moment of his misfortune. To Josephine his conduct appears very praiseworthy, but Louis's return makes her fear fresh tortures for Hortense, and she is afflicted by the thought. “Courage, my dear daughter; a soul as pure as yours always in the end triumphs over all.” Hortense in her reply shows herself forgiving to her husband.

“He is a good Frenchman,” she says. “He proves it by returning to France at a moment when all Europe declares itself against her. He is an upright man, and if our characters could not be sympathetic it is because we had faults which could not exist together.”

In her November letter Josephine speaks also of Eugène's successful retreat before the Austrian forces. She was destined to feel some anxiety about Eugène before the end of the war. The Viceroy of Italy had received overtures from his father-in-law, the King of Bavaria, inviting him, in decently veiled language, to betray Napoleon, as Joachim Murat had already done at Naples, on the understanding that his family should be assured an advantageous position in Italy. Eugène, who was loyally supported by Augusta, rejected the suggestion and proudly declared his conviction (did he feel it?) that King Maximilian-Joseph would prefer to see his son-in-law an honourable nobody than a traitor king. The only dealings which he would have with the Allies were on the subject of leaving his wife, who was expecting another child, at Milan in the event of his evacuating Italy.

Eugène displayed, in fact, the utmost faithfulness to his trust. Unfortunately, as had always been the case, his intelligence was not equal to his loyalty, and the indecision which he showed in command of the Italian troops caused Napoleon, embittered by the conduct of Bernadotte and Murat, and merely knowing that the Viceroy was in communication with the enemy, to suspect his step-son of thinking of his own interests and inclining to make arrangements with the Allies. He took, therefore, a curious step, in view of his usual attitude toward the interference of women in political affairs. Instead of appealing to Eugène directly, he wrote to Josephine and Hortense asking them to urge Eugène to carry out his orders. Consequently we find Josephine writing to her son, under the date of Malmaison, February 9, 1814 :

“ Do not lose an instant, my dear Eugène ; whatever the obstacles, redouble your efforts to fulfil the orders given you by the Emperor. He has just written to me on the subject. His wish is that you should march toward the Alps, leaving in Mantua and the Italian fortresses only the troops belonging to the Kingdom of Italy. His letter finishes with these words :

‘France before all! France has need of all her sons!’ Come then, my dear son, hasten. Your zeal will never be of more use to the Emperor. 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 service to her. Good-bye, my dear Eugène, I have no more time except to embrace you and to tell you again to come very quickly.”

Eugène was profoundly hurt. His mother’s letter had confounded him, he replied, and he had not thought it would be necessary at this late stage to give proofs to the Emperor of his fidelity and devotion. He had received no positive orders to retire to the Alps, and he had thought himself within his rights in remaining in Italy. An animated correspondence followed between him and Augusta on the one hand, and the Emperor on the other,¹ in which the Emperor certainly did not have the best of it, although he was at pains to put himself right in their eyes, insisting that what he had desired was that Augusta’s child should be born in the midst of her family in France and making no mention of any doubts about Eugène. On the

¹ It is set forth in Eugène’s “Mémoires,” vol. x.

contrary, he wrote to the latter : " I paid you no compliment [on your reply to the King of Bavaria] because you only did your duty, and it is a simple matter."

If we were to judge by the remains of her correspondence—which would be unfair, seeing how fragmentary it is—we should imagine that Josephine was chiefly concerned about Eugène's retention of his position in Italy, whatever else might occur. " I am convinced that the Emperor will cede Italy," she writes to Hortense, " but, no matter what happens, our dear Eugène will have won a fine reputation, and that is the chief thing." Her anxiety for her son was natural ; but there were other things going on around her which might profitably have employed her attention. As the Allies gradually forced their way toward Paris, the conspiracy within the city grew stronger under the direction of Talleyrand, " assuredly the greatest enemy of our house," as Napoleon wrote to his brother Joseph. And at Malmaison was one of the " laboratories of treason," as M. Masson says.¹ In the collection of former

¹ " Joséphine Répudiée," 321, where he gives a list of the traitors in Josephine's Household. See also *ib.* 328.

Royalists and aristocrats with whom the mistress had delighted to surround herself no feelings of gratitude toward the Empire acted as a restraint, and Josephine's dearest friend, Mme. de Rémusat, was among the plotters. Josephine was ignorant of all that was taking place, no doubt. But was it not probable that, if she had been less acutely anxious about the future of her own immediate family, she might have been able to supervise the doings of her Household ?

The approach of war toward the walls of Paris, however, deprived her of all power of reflection, and there was no one to advise her loyally. She thought of going to join the Emperor, as previously she had thought of flying to Marie-Louise. But she did not move. She sat with her ladies at Malmaison, making bandages for the wounded like the other Empress's Court. All visitors from Paris were eagerly questioned by her, as if she were likely to get information of importance from them. "She asked inconsequent questions," says Mlle. Ducrest, "and made no answers to the questions addressed to her ; her whole mind was deranged and her eyes were wet with tears."

The end was now at hand. The Allied Armies were within a few days of Paris. The Empress Marie-Louise and the King of Rome, by the decision of the Council of State and the Emperor's own orders, were on the point of leaving for Blois. Hortense, who had been ordered to accompany the Court, wrote to her mother announcing the news. Josephine's despairing reply, sent from Malmaison in March 28, was as follows :

“ My dear Hortense, I had courage up to the moment when I received your letter. I cannot think without anguish that I am separating myself from you, God knows for how long a time. I am following your advice ; I shall leave to-morrow for Navarre. I have here only a guard of sixteen men, and all are wounded. I will keep them, but really I have no need of them. I am so unhappy at being separated from my children that I am indifferent to my fate. I am troubled only about you. Try to send me news, to keep me informed of your plans, and to tell me whither you go. I shall at least try to follow you from afar. Good-bye, my dear daughter ; I embrace you tenderly.”

On the following morning, which was wet and

cold, Josephine set out from Malmaison with her Household and all that she could take with her from Malmaison. In ready money she had little over fifty thousand francs, collected from Hortense and the Duchesse d'Arenberg. In a wadded petticoat were sewn her most valuable diamonds and pearls, her jewellery cases were loaded in her carriage with other objects dear to her heart. Would she ever see Malmaison again? She passed the two days of the journey in misery. At one point, according to a story told by the Duchesse d'Abrantès, a servant caught sight of a few horsemen and cried out, "The Cossacks!" Josephine opened her carriage-door, sprang out, and started to run. Her followers caught her up, and at last, after swearing to her that there was not a Cossack in sight, persuaded her to return to her seat.

Another letter to Hortense was written on the morrow of Josephine's arrival at Navarre. It is the last in the Queen's collection.

"I cannot tell you how unhappy I am," says Josephine after announcing her arrival. "I have had courage in the painful positions in which I have found myself, I shall have it to bear the reverses of fortune; but I have not

sufficient to put up with my children's absence and the uncertainty of their fate. For two days I have not ceased to shed tears. Send me news of yourself and of your children ; if you have any of Eugène and his family, let me hear. I very much fear no news will come from Paris, seeing that the post from Paris to Evreux has broken down—which has led to the circulation of a lot of news. Among other things, it is asserted that the Neuilly bridge has been occupied by the enemy. This would be very near to Malmaison. . . .”

In these last surviving letters of Josephine there is a curious lack of reference to Napoleon. They are full of love for her children and her grandchildren. That of March 31 betrays anxiety for the fate of Malmaison. Of the Emperor there is not a word. We hear from other sources that Josephine had expressed a wish to go to the Emperor to sustain him (!) in his hour of trial, but from her letters to Hortense one would not gather that she felt any concern for his fate.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE END

SCARCELY had Josephine settled herself at Navarre with such members of her Household as did not prefer to remain in Paris to greet the Allied Armies' arrival, when a letter came from Hortense to the effect that Paris had capitulated and that the Emperor was at Fontainebleau. On April 1 Hortense herself appeared at Navarre. Offended by an order from the Empress Regent, which reached her at Rambouillet on March 31, to come with her children to Blois, the Queen of Holland had changed her mind and refused to go to Blois. Marie-Louise's order had been brought by Louis Bonaparte's messenger and had both hurt Hortense's susceptibilities and aroused her suspicions. She sent back a refusal to obey, cut herself off from the Court, and started for her mother's estate, taking her two sons with her. At Navarre she found awaiting her a

cold reception from the Household, who never appreciated the etiquette which always enveloped the Queen of Holland ; but from Josephine a most loving welcome. "The pleasure of embracing her daughter and grandchildren," writes Mlle. Cochelet, who accompanied Hortense, "was a great consolation to the Empress Josephine, who was tortured inexpressibly about the Emperor's fate." Hortense's faithful follower continues : "What days were this Saturday and Sunday ! All that had been most brilliant among us at Paris was at Navarre : the Duchesse de Bassano, who arrived there with her children and her sisters, on her way to Alençon ; Mme. Mollien, so fondly attached to the Queen, who had gone from her own home to the Empress Marie-Louise and was already returning from Blois, where she had left her husband ; Mme. Gazzani, tearful and still beautiful. And all without a man, without a notion what to do !"

Josephine lodged her daughter in the smaller château, which from April 1810 had been assigned to her whenever she should be able to visit Navarre. She herself stopped in the larger building, waiting for the arrival of tidings which

she knew could only be bad and racking herself by reading all the newspapers on which she could lay hands. In her letter to General Caffarelli's wife, written on April 7, she says : " I reached here on the 30th and the Queen two days later, with her children. She, too, is ill and as painfully affected as I am. Our hearts are broken at all that is happening, and particularly at the ingratitude of the French. The papers are full of the most horrible abuse. If you have not read them, do not take the trouble, for they will hurt you."

The order of events during the early days of April 1814 is rather uncertain, the various accounts conflicting. As far as can be gathered, the intelligence of the Emperor's abdication came with dramatic suddenness. It was night, and all at Navarre were fast asleep, when the sound of a carriage and horses was heard coming up the avenue and approaching the building. The carriage stopped in the courtyard, and a few minutes later there was a knock at the Empress's door. Josephine rose and hastily put on a dressing-gown. She found that her visitor was M. de Maussion, auditor to the Council of State, who had been sent by the

Duc de Bassano to convey to his Duchess information of the abdication, and who had turned aside from his road to inform the Empress. At first Josephine failed to take in the news, and could only understand that it was a disaster of which she was being told. But the Emperor was alive? She made the messenger repeat his assurance that this was so. At last she took a candle and asked Maussion to come with her to Queen Hortense, who had already awoken and was eagerly awaiting them. Maussion again told his tale, and now Josephine understood that the Empire had fallen, that the Bourbons were back, and that Napoleon was going into exile. According to Mlle. Cochelet, the name of Elba was already mentioned. "I shall never forget the Empress's exclamation," she writes, "when M. de Maussion related that the Emperor was going to the island of Elba. 'Oh, Hortense,' she cried, bending over her daughter, 'what misery for him, confined to the island of Elba! Oh, were it not for his wife, I would go and shut myself up with him!' We all were in tears at the sight of the anguish of the poor woman who had already suffered so much." Mlle. Cochelet, however, naturally

pays more attention to the feelings of her mistress the Queen than to those of Josephine, and relates how Hortense made up her mind that she must leave France. "My mother can stay in France, since her divorce leaves her free, but I bear a name which makes residence here impossible now that the Bourbons are back." Her plan was to sell her diamonds and to go to Martinique to live on the estate now belonging to Josephine at Trois-Ilets. "It will be a great sacrifice, of course, to leave France, my mother, and my friends, but there I shall be in peace. I shall bring up my children well, and that will be my consolation." The resolve was heroic, but for the moment Hortense was fully determined to put it into execution. We do not hear how Josephine received the news, nor how she and her daughter passed the next few days, except that at the end of a letter affirming her determination not to go to Malmaison Hortense says: "My mother combats all my plans and tells me that she has need of me." This was written to Mlle. Cochelet, whom she had sent to Paris to make preparations to accompany her to Martinique.

On March 16 the "Journal des Débats" made

the announcement that "the mother of Prince Eugène has returned to Malmaison."¹ It was true. Mlle. Cochelet had found in Paris, especially among the Russians, a desire that the Beauharnais ladies should come back to Malmaison at once. Josephine needed no encouragement to bring her to her beloved home. Already she had written to a friend in Paris suggesting it. But Hortense was still otherwise minded in spite of the flattering assurance of Nesselrode to Mlle. Cochelet that she had nothing to fear and that every one was full of affection for her and her mother and brother. She did not see how she could desert the Bonapartes in their evil hour. The greater their misfortune, she told Mlle. Cochelet, the more she wished to share it with them. Her brother would be happy, her mother would have her country and her property; but she, for her children's sake,

¹ This title, as it appeared later, was not satisfactory to Josephine. When the "Débats" spoke of the Tsar dining at Saint-Leu on May 14 with "Prince Eugène, his mother and sister," she complained: "Can they not speak of me with a little more respect? Must I thus follow after my son? It is most unsuitable. I have a name, I was on the throne, I was crowned and consecrated. The Emperor Alexander has specially protected me; as soon as he was master of the Neuilly bridge he sent me a safeguard to Malmaison. Why then call me 'the mother of Prince Eugène'?"

must go into exile. The pressure redoubled. Constant messages came from Nesselrode, with promises of a visit from the Tsar Alexander if only she would go to Malmaison. It was even intimated that Napoleon himself wished her to go thither, and that her children's future, in his opinion, depended on it. But Hortense was unconvinced. She set out again for Rambouillet, where Marie-Louise now was. "The advice of the Duc de Vicence [who had brought Napoleon's alleged message] can be followed by my mother," she said. "She will go to Malmaison, but I stay; I have only too good reasons. I cannot separate my cause from that of my children."

Joséphine, therefore, left Navarre without her daughter. She had already departed when a message from the Duc de Berry arrived, offering her an escort to Malmaison and assuring her that he would be charmed to do all that might be agreeable for her, having for her "as much respect as admiration." The humiliation of accepting this offer was spared her, and she reached Malmaison without a Royalist guard of honour.

The desire which Alexander of Russia had expressed, through Nesselrode, of seeing Jose-



ALEXANDER I., EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.

From an engraving after Volkoff.

phine and Hortense in Paris was genuine, as he lost no time in showing. A message reached Malmaison on the day of its mistress's arrival that the Tsar would pay a call on the morrow. He came in the afternoon and from the beginning showed the greatest deference. Alexander was at this time thirty-five years of age and hardly looked as old, although his golden hair had begun to recede from his high forehead. His sky-blue eyes, rather short-sighted, were full of amiability, and a benevolent smile was habitual on his lips. His attentive courtesy to ladies was well known, and when he exerted himself he could not fail to please. At Malmaison he succeeded at once. Josephine fell under the spell of his kindly personality, and in her turn appeared to make a most favourable impression. This first call gave the note to their future intercourse. The same was not the case with Hortense, who arrived quite unexpectedly at Malmaison on the day of the Tsar's visit. After Josephine's departure from Navarre she had gone to Rambouillet, in a fit of contrition for her disobedience to the Empress's recent order, and had offered her services to Marie-Louise. But the latter had received

her with chilly thanks and an air of embarrassment, unable to respond to Hortense's generous expressions of loyalty to the fallen cause. Seeing that she was not wanted at Rambouillet, and beginning to see that her departure to Martinique might not be pleasing to Napoleon, Hortense determined to rejoin her mother. On her meeting with Alexander, however, she showed none of Josephine's friendliness. "So amiable ordinarily," says Mlle. Cochelet, "she scarcely showed herself so to him. She remained cold and very dignified, and made no response to the offers which the Emperor made to her with regard to her children."

Alexander, however, was sincere in his professions toward mother and daughter, and, undeterred by Hortense's first reception of him, while delighted with Josephine's "amiability, kindness, and unconstraint," asked to be allowed to call again. Josephine gave her permission gladly, for which, and for her general attitude toward Alexander, she has been severely taken to task by many Bonapartist writers. In the circumstances in which she was placed her behaviour was at least excusable. She was indeed "the mother of Prince Eugène"

and of Hortense, as well as the discarded wife of Napoleon Bonaparte. Eugène's loyal conduct alone, perhaps, would have been sufficient to induce the Allies to treat him favourably, and Hortense had, if she chose to accept it, the sympathy of Europe. Nevertheless, their mother may be pardoned for her anxiety that they should come well out of the rearrangement following the Empire's fall. Her eagerness about her own interests, and particularly about Malmaison, was less admirable. Yet, since her critics condemn her selfishness on every occasion, it is somewhat surprising that they should not now dismiss it as merely natural. She was undoubtedly fearful lest she might be separated from the home, the treasures, and the life of ease which she loved so well. That she should make what efforts she could to retain them was all that could be expected of her, unless adversity was to make of her an entirely different character and turn a pleasure-loving and self-indulgent woman into a dignified and self-denying heroine, who, in order to secure for herself a future of lonely exile (since by no means would she have been able to accompany the ex-Emperor to Elba, was ready to refuse all

terms from the conquerors of France. It is a blow to Napoleon's thick-and-thin supporters that she who had once been his wife should seem to forget his past generosity to her and her family;¹ but is their attitude reasonable? Certainly not, on their estimate of her character.

At the same time, it is true that the world would have reason to think better of Josephine had she thought less of her own position at Malmaison; had she refrained from complaining, as Mlle. Ducrest says that she complained, that Napoleon neglected to see that she was paid the pension which he assigned her; and had she not desired to write to the Royalist Government asking for the title of Constable of France for Eugène, and, perhaps, of Duchesse de Navarre for herself.

The Tsar Alexander quickly availed himself of the permission to call again at Malmaison.

¹ This generosity lasted to the end. By the treaty signed at Fontainebleau (which, as M. Masson says, is really Napoleon's will) he assigned to Josephine a pension of a million francs a year; and, out of 2,500,000 assigned by Article 6 to the Imperial family, 400,000 to Hortense. Joseph and Jerome were to have 500,000 each; Madame Mère, Elisa, and Pauline, 300,000 each; Louis, 200,000; and Eugène *un établissement convenable hors de France*.

He was followed by the King of Prussia and his two sons, by other German princes from Baden, Bavaria, Mecklenburg, and by crowds of visitors of all nationalities. If the Duchesse de Reggio is to be believed, even the Comte d'Artois was seen at Malmaison. The Emperor of Austria, it was said, felt embarrassed at the idea of calling; but Josephine remarked: "Why, indeed? Not at all! It is not I whom he has dethroned, but his own daughter."

On May 9 Eugène arrived in Paris from Munich, whither he had gone after leaving Italy, and the Beauharnais family were united again. They found that Nesselrode's assurances to Mlle. Cochelet about the feeling in Paris toward them were scarcely exaggerated. Eugène was well received by the Bourbons, Hortense was offered and accepted the Duchy of Saint-Leu, and French visitors, as soon as they saw that it was the desire of the Court, went like the rest of the world to Malmaison, which had never seen so varied and brilliant a society since 1809. In May 1814 Josephine might almost have imagined herself Empress again, did she judge only by the crowds thronging her rooms.

None who came to the château were more warmly welcomed than Alexander, and none came more often. Hortense's coldness had been overcome by the amiable persistence of his attentions; Eugène was persuaded of his strong support in securing a suitable establishment for him in Europe; and Josephine's liking for him had only increased since the first day of their meeting. He had become a genuine friend of the family and could be seen frequently walking in the park at Malmaison with the mother on one arm, the daughter on the other. Might he not also see Saint-Leu? he asked. Hortense was delighted. "Your Majesty must not expect to see a royal residence," said Josephine. "Saint-Leu is only the simple home of a woman of the world, and Your Majesty must be prepared to make every allowance for the modest reception which he will get." On this understanding, which in no way dismayed the Tsar, a man of rather simple tastes, it was arranged that the visit should be paid on May 14. From this day dates the fatal illness of Josephine.

When the 14th arrived, Josephine was already feeling the effects of a cold, but she declared

that she never paid attention to such things, and after the mid-day breakfast she drove out with the Tsar, Hortense, Eugène, the Duc de Vicence, Mme. Ney, and two other ladies in a *char-à-banc* to visit the neighbouring woods of Montmorency. The weather was damp, and Josephine felt worse on her return to the house. She took an infusion of the orange-flower water which Napoleon had taught her to use and lay down until dinner-time. To Mlle. Cochelet she confessed that she was suffering from a frightful melancholy, which it took her all her efforts to disguise from her children ; she could not get rid of the idea that they would never see fulfilled the promises which were made to them. " Must I again see my children wandering and destitute ? " she asked. " The idea is killing me ! " In spite of her indisposition she refused to give way, and when dinner was ready she came down in one of her usual light and low-cut dresses. Unable to eat, however, she retired again for a little and only reappeared after the meal to assist Hortense and Eugène in entertaining. Hortense sang to the Tsar some of her own songs, and when he left he appeared very pleased with his day at Saint-

Leu. Still depressed by her bodily state, Josephine sadly remarked that, though Alexander was charming, he was not the only master. "My poor children, I am very much afraid that you will reap nothing but fine words!" After this gloomy prediction she rested in an easy-chair for some time before she felt well enough to go up to bed.

On her return to Malmaison next day, Josephine received a troublesome visit from her old acquaintance, Mme. de Staël. The Duchesse de Reggio, who called at Malmaison the same day, remarks that Mme. de Staël's visit was "a good action in itself, if the woman of genius had not been too anxious to make capital of it for her studies of the human heart." The Duchess waited outside the room where the meeting took place. "When the Empress and Mme. de Staël appeared, we noticed the air of great agitation and emotion in the former. Mme. de Staël crossed the room rapidly, bowed, and went out." The woman of genius had not found this particular study of the human heart altogether satisfactory. For when she had gone, Josephine came up to the Duchess and two other guests,



MADAME DE STAËL.

From an engraving after the picture by Mlle. M. E. de Godefroy.

one of whom was Mme. Walewska, still an occasional visitor at Malmaison, and said : " I have just had a very painful interview. Would you believe that, among other questions which Mme. de Staël was pleased to put to me, she asked if I still loved the Emperor ? She appeared to wish to analyse my soul in the presence of this great misfortune. I, who never ceased to love the Emperor throughout his happy days . . . is it likely that to-day I should grow cold toward him ? "

Josephine continued ailing, but would not hear of abandoning her social duties. A week after the scene described by the Duchesse de Reggio, she had among her guests to dinner at Malmaison the King of Prussia, his two sons, and, according to some, the Russian and Austrian Emperors as well. She forced herself to entertain them in her usual scanty costume, and next morning was very much worse. But Alexander and the Grand Dukes Nicholas and Michael were dining with her that night, and she not only appeared at the table, but also at the dance after dinner opened the ball with the Tsar and walked out with him in the park. On the 25th she was still

up and receiving visitors, though not really fit to do so. She was much upset by seeing in one of the papers a violent attack on Hortense in connection with the removal of the body of little Napoleon-Charles from Notre-Dame to one of the Paris cemeteries, and her fit of weeping over this did her considerable harm. She awoke next day with a fever and attacks of coughing. Her personal physician ordered her to stay in bed and put a blister on her neck. According to Lenoir, who says that he called at Malmaison that day, she ought to have been at the Tuileries to be presented to King Louis. His statement is unsupported, so that it cannot be said whether she really had the intention of going to the Court of the Bourbons as Eugène had already done. Death at any rate saved her memory from this reproach.

Death was approaching rapidly. Alexander was to have dined with Josephine again on the 27th before leaving Paris for London. He arrived with a large number of other guests, including, it was said, the "Englishman" who had known Yeyette in Martinique forty years before. Eugène was ill in bed

like his mother, and only Hortense was able to be present to receive those invited, who all left early except the Tsar. He had already displayed his anxiety on the 14th and 24th, and now sent his own physician to see the patient. Hortense called in other advice and there was a consultation of doctors, who declared Josephine's condition to be grave. No immediately fatal result, however, was expected, although the case was stated to be one of "putrid fever." Eugène wrote to his wife hopefully and spoke of his approaching return to Munich. On the night of May 28 only a waiting-woman watched Josephine. In the morning, Whit Sunday, it was seen that the end was at hand. Eugène and Hortense came to the bedroom and it was decided that the sacraments should be administered. The almoner, Monseigneur Barral, being absent, the abbé Bertrand, who was the tutor of Hortense's children, gave them to the dying woman, "who received them," according to the words of the funeral oration, "with sentiments of the greatest piety and most touching resignation." At noon she died. According to the legend, her last delirious words were "Napoleon

. . . Elba!"¹ At the end of her collection of letters of Napoleon and Josephine, Queen Hortense says simply that Josephine "died in the arms of her children on May 29, 1814." Mlle. Cochelet adds that at the last Josephine held out her arms to her children and tried to speak, but not a word could be heard. Hortense fell in a faint upon the floor and was carried out insensible, while Eugène knelt down by the bed until his mother died in his arms a few moments later.

On the day following her death Josephine's body was embalmed and placed in a lead coffin enclosed in oak. The beautiful tresses of her hair had already been cut off by Mlle. Cochelet to be given to Hortense. The public were now admitted to Malmaison, and it was estimated that more than twenty thousand people visited the place; many, no doubt, out of mere curiosity to see the house and grounds. The funeral took place on June 2, the coffin being

¹ Or "Napoleon . . . Elba . . . Marie-Louise!" Edward Stanley, Bishop of Norwich, it may be noted, who visited Malmaison soon after Josephine's death, says that she died "sensible to the last; talked of death, seemed perfectly resigned—to use the words of a French lady, who told me many interesting particulars, *sa mort était très chrétienne*" ("Letters," p. 134).



A
JOSEPHINE
EUGÈNE ET HORTENSE
1825.

TOMB OF THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE IN THE CHURCH OF RUEIL.

Photo by Neurdin Frères.

taken from Malmaison to the church of Rueil in a procession in which the chief mourners were Hortense's children, Hortense herself and Eugène clinging to the Imperial etiquette which compelled them to be absent from the service, and remaining at Saint-Leu. Beside the two little boys there were present of Josephine's and her first husband's families the Comte Tascher and the Duchesse d'Arenberg (Stéphanie Tascher), the Marquis and the Comte de Beauharnais, and Mme. Lavalette (Emilie Beauharnais). The Tsar Alexander was represented by General Sacken, the other sovereigns by aides-de-camp, the Prince of Mecklenburg and the Grand Duke of Baden were present in person, and a large crowd of all nationalities attended at the church. The military honours were furnished by a detachment of the Russian Imperial Guards, although the local National Guards took part in the procession to Rueil. The interment took place within the church itself at the spot now marked by the monument erected to the memory of their mother by Eugène and Hortense in 1825.¹ The funeral

¹ Josephine's tomb is on the right hand of the choir of Rueil. It is in white marble, the work of Gilet and Dubuc, while the

oration by the Archbishop of Tours was not more interesting nor more generally truthful than such eulogies are wont to be, but contained one paragraph which deserves quotation as showing the attitude which the restored monarchy took up toward Napoleon's former wife. "How many unfortunates," asked Monseigneur Barral, "condemned by their fidelity to the august family of the Bourbons to live in exile from their fatherland, are beholden to her persistent and touching intercession for their restoration to their families and to the country which saw their birth? How many saw opened by her exertions the gates of the prison which imprudence and, most often, unjust suspicion had closed upon them? How many were rescued from the axe of the law at the moment when it was about to cut short their lives?" It was Josephine the protector of the *émigrés* whom all good Royalists were invited to lament.

Only little more rests to be told—the last kneeling figure of Josephine is by Cartellier. The inscription runs simply: "A Joséphine, Eugène et Hortense, 1825." Hortense's tomb is in a similar position to the left of the choir and bears the inscription "À la Reine Hortense, son fils Napoléon III."

tribute to Josephine of the man who made her his wife and his Empress. Strange and heartless though such conduct seems, there is no evidence that any one of his family or hers sent to Napoleon in Elba any information of the death of Josephine. The news is said to have reached him through a copy of a paper forwarded to him from Genoa by a valet going to France on an errand from his master. When he heard what had happened he shut himself up and would see no one. He forbore from wearing mourning. Strict as he always was about etiquette, he would not put on crape for his divorced wife when he had another wife living. The opportunity for showing his respect occurred when, once more in Paris in March 1815, he sought for details of the death-scene. "So you let my poor Josephine die," he reproached Corvisart. Of her own doctor he asked the cause of the fatal illness. "Sire," stammered Horeau, "anxiety . . . sorrow. . . ." "Do you think so? What sorrow?" "At what was happening, Sire—at Your Majesty's position." "Oh, so she spoke of me?" "Often, very often." "Good woman, good Josephine! She loved me truly." Profoundly

touched, the Emperor insisted on hearing all about her last days and about those who had been kind to her, particularly the Tsar Alexander. A few days later he paid a short visit to Malmaison, spending most of the time in the death-chamber, where he shut himself in alone and whence he came out with evident traces of the tears which he had shed.

Napoleon saw Malmaison once again near the close of the Hundred Days. On the night of June 24 (only one day later than the fifty-second anniversary of Josephine's birthday) he spoke during dinner at the Elysée to Hortense, who, in spite of her apparent reconciliation with the Bourbons, had returned to her allegiance when Napoleon escaped from Elba, and after some coldness on his part had been restored to his favour. "I wish to go to Malmaison," he said. "It belongs to you. Will you give me hospitality there?" Hortense readily agreed, and the same evening he started on his way with her and a small handful of followers in attendance. Of the few remaining days of his life as a free man Napoleon was to spend five at Josephine's Malmaison.

Late in the night of the 24th he wandered

about the park, speaking to his companions of his intended flight to America. On the morrow and during the following days, while waiting to hear the decision of France and of her conquerors on his fate, he spent long hours with Hortense and others who still remained loyal, recalling memories of the past. The associations of the dead were thick about him. Standing before a bank of roses in her garden, he said: "Poor Josephine! I cannot accustom myself to living here without her. I seem always to see her coming along the path and picking one of these flowers which she loved so well. Truly she was the most graceful woman I have ever seen!"¹ On the 29th at last the decision of the Provisional Government was to reach Napoleon. He still hoped that he might be called upon to take up arms again to hold back the enemy while France negotiated terms, after which he could retire across the

¹ The firmness of his conviction on this point is illustrated by his remarks to Barry O'Meara at Saint-Helena: "Josephine was grace personified (*la grazia in persona*). Everything she did was with a peculiar grace and delicacy. I never saw her act inelegantly during the whole time we lived together." And again: "*Eva la dama la più graziosa di Francia*. She was the goddess of the toilet, all the fashions originated with her; everything she put on appeared elegant."

Atlantic. He waited in uniform for the return of General Becker from Paris, while horses were ready outside to carry him to Paris. Hortense and his brother Joseph were with him. Becker arrived and announced that the Government would have no dealings with him. "They still fear me," said Napoleon to Hortense. "I wished to make a last effort for the safety of France. They would not have it!" He went upstairs, changed his military costume for civilian clothes, and passed into Josephine's room, where he spent some time by himself, with the doors closed. Then, coming downstairs, he said good-bye to Joseph and Hortense, got into a private carriage, and drove off towards Rochefort.

At Malmaison a memorial was set up, with the mark of a footprint, a bronze eagle, and the words, "The last step of Napoleon leaving for Rochefort on June 29, 1815, at 4 in the afternoon."

je n'ai pas reçu de lettres de toi, ma chère
Hortense, depuis mon départ de Nevers;
ton silence me donne beaucoup d'inquiétude,
je crains qu'en voyage éprouvé de nouveaux
ressentiments de fièvre. Dis-moi mes
cousine, donne-moi de tes nouvelles. m'as-tu
envoyé aussi ce que tu as décidé pour les
sema. j'irai à celles d'été en septembre, et
je compte partir vers le 15 juin. tu
sans ce que je t'ai marqué dans ma
dernière lettre ses propriétés de ces
sema, surtout dans les affections nerveuses,
je suis persuadé qu'elles te feraient
beaucoup de bien, et le plaisir d'être
ensemble les rendrait encore meilleures
pour toi et pour moi. j'en ai vu bien
ton fils, il me paraît un peu plus gai
et la voir la tenir meilleure qu'il
y a huit jours. embrasse pour moi
mon père et ta chère fille
et toute ma tendresse pour toi.
à Valenciennes le 17 may - Josephine

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM JOSEPHINE TO HORTENSE.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

THE story of Josephine has been brought to an end. It only remains for us to make a brief review of her principal characteristics, as they appear in the course of the tale, in order that we may be able to say, if possible, how it was that she succeeded in attaining a position in history to which neither her intellect nor any surpassing physical beauty gave her claims.

That she had no such claims it would perhaps be hardly necessary to repeat, except to emphasise the strangeness of what time and men's love of romance have done for a woman who for more than thirty out of her fifty-one years of life was utterly obscure. And first with regard to her beauty, the practical unanimity of observers actuated by very different personal feelings toward her is most striking. The portraits of her are innumerable, for she had

an inordinate love of being painted, and sat to Gérard, Isabey, Prudhon, Gros, David, and many others, while busts and medallions abound. Few of these portraits give a very pleasing impression. When we come to the written descriptions, what we are apt to remember is the rouged and powdered face, with the close-lipped smile that concealed the badness of the teeth behind, and the wonderful elaboration of the chestnut hair on the top of the head. Not even in the earliest days of her second marriage are we allowed to forget that it is a carefully preserved woman past her prime—for she was a Creole and over thirty—upon whom we are looking. The freshness had gone, and artifice has come in to supply the deficiencies of nature. But, when this has been said, a high tribute has to be paid to the result which Josephine achieved with what remained to her. Her smile is always charming, in spite of the shut mouth; her eyes are beautiful, if not the equal of her daughter's; her nose is delicate, in great contrast to that of Hortense. It is, however, her slender, supple, well-proportioned figure, needing no corset to support it, which enables her to pose as a beauty. A most perfect self-

training had developed her from the awkward, rather heavy girl that she was when she left Martinique into the most graceful woman of her day, Napoleon's "*la grazia in persona*," who was "graceful even as she went to bed." Taught by her own observation, she knew how to show to its fullest advantage her elegant, indolent body; and knew, moreover, how to dress it in the clothes that became it best, the soft white muslins and cambrics which looked so simple, yet at the same time displayed a marvellous complexity of costly embroidery and lace. To complete the harmony there was her caressing Creole voice, so beautiful in tone that the Palace servants were said to halt in the passages to listen to it, and that Napoleon, wishing to express his pleasure at the applause of his troops and his subjects, could only say that it was "as sweet to him as the voice of his Josephine."

To give full value to what physical advantages nature had bestowed upon her, Josephine devoted loving care. It was otherwise with her mind. Her education remained to the end of her life much what it had been when Alexandre de Beauharnais gave her up in despair

and abandoned the training of his wife to whosoever wished to undertake it. With the passage of time she became indeed sophisticated, but not better educated. At Saint-Pierre she had shown some aptitude for dancing and music ; not much for the latter after all, it would appear, for in later life she could do no more than touch the harp indifferently and, according to some, used only to play one tune. Her long leisure was at no period of her existence devoted to reading. There was a library at Malmaison, which served as Napoleon's study before the divorce. We never hear of Josephine herself reading, except to Napoleon in bed. She had on her staff a reader, who during the travels after the divorce might entertain her mistress and the other ladies with the latest novels and plays from Paris. Readers under the Empire were chosen more for their beauty than with a view that they should earn their salaries by reading. As for Josephine's artistic appreciation, what importance is to be attached to her enormous collection of pictures, her Old Masters of the Italian and Flemish schools, her French and Spanish painters of all periods ? She certainly made a wonderful gallery of

Malmaison and wrested from Napoleon canvases which it cost his conscience a pang to give up to her. "Although these masterpieces were in my Palace, under my eyes, in my household," he once said, "it seemed to me as if I had been robbed, since they ought to have been in the Museum." But the mere accumulation of art treasures proves little with regard to Josephine's understanding. She was clearly a collector by nature. The interior of her château, the mere inventory of her belongings, demonstrate this. The great hoards of curiosities, antiques, jewellery, good and bad, and all that made Malmaison such a remarkable place to look upon, are witnesses to the multiplicity of her tastes, but hardly to her taste. There is rather more than a suspicion, there is practically a certainty, that she loved to heap up treasures simply because they were treasures and represented to her the buying-power of that money which, from her first moment of independence, as soon as she escaped from the bondage of her first marriage, she seemed ready to sacrifice almost anything to obtain. No sooner had she met, and conquered the heart of, Napoleon than money began to pour upon her in a con-

tinuous stream ; yet she never had enough, down to the day of her death, to satisfy her capacity for spending.

Of this one reproach not even the most enthusiastic admirers of the Empress Josephine have made any serious effort to clear her memory. That, from the time when she escaped death in the prison of Les Carmes and re-entered into society, she lived in the midst of an ever-increasing ocean of debts, it would be useless to deny, and the biographers under the Second Empire, when the order had gone forth to glorify the grandmother of Napoleon III., evaded the difficulty merely by ignoring the subject as far as possible or by referring simply to her extravagant charities. Later writers, untrammelled by the desire to please a grandson, have lifted the veil ; and, in particular, M. Masson in his various works on the life of Josephine has made most careful researches into her expenditure, with the result that a really astounding picture is presented of a feminine spendthrift. Simple enumerations of figures would not be very interesting, but some attempt may be made to give a brief summary. Napoleon on six occasions insisted on receiving

statements of his wife's debts, twice before the Empire and four times during it. In 1800 he paid what she admitted that she owed—according to Bourrienne, 600,000 francs. (This did not include the debt on Malmaison nor on some “national property” in the canton of Glabbaix which Josephine had bought but only begun to pay for; if we counted this in the amount paid off in 1800 it would be about 2,000,000 francs.) In 1804 he paid over 700,000; in 1806, 650,000; in 1807, 391,000; in 1809, 60,000; and finally, after the divorce, 1,400,000 francs. These six settlements account for more than 3,800,000 francs. Before paying the bills Napoleon was in the habit of revising them and reducing them, as when in the last liquidation he struck off 500,000 francs, as already related. The actual bills presented may therefore be presumed to have been between four and five million francs. The principal item, in fact the only one of importance, was toilet, including jewellery. Under the Empire the allowance made for toilet was 360,000 francs a year until 1809, when it was raised to 450,000. On M. Masson's computation, however, Josephine's expenditure on toilet was 1,100,000

francs a year while she was reigning Empress. Jewellers claimed about half of this, although Josephine had the right to wear all the Crown jewels, of which the principal diamond set was valued at 3,709,583 francs. Her personal jewellery, exclusive of a quantity of unimportant stuff, was reckoned at 4,354,255 francs. This was her greatest passion perhaps ; for even in her early days as Vicomtesse de Beauharnais she was said to carry in her pocket the stones included in her wedding present in order that she might feel them as she went about. Of her expenditure on dress something has already been said in an earlier chapter, where it has been indicated that an apparent simplicity of attire was combined with heavy expenditure on details. A white muslin or cambric dress, owing to its exquisite embroideries, might cost her two thousand francs. The size of her wardrobe was enormous. To mention only two items, it contained five hundred chemises and two hundred pairs of silk stockings. In one month, it was said, she bought thirty-eight new hats.¹ Everything was new. As she

¹ M. Masson enumerates one year's purchase of clothes, costing more than 320,000 francs : 23 ells of lace, 7 full

bought with the one hand, Josephine gave away with the other ; and gave away to all manner of people, from princesses of her own family, of her husband's family, or of friendly States, down to the waiting-women of her Household. It was her habit to go completely through her stock of clothes twice during each year and to renew the greater part of it.

In vain Napoleon tried to limit the Empress's spending by ordering all dealers in millinery, jewellery, and the rest to be kept away from the Tuileries. They continued to penetrate into the Palace, behind his back, and his efforts to limit her custom to the leading firms were unavailing. After all, discovery only entailed a "scene," and it is impossible to resist the thought that Josephine's terror at scenes was largely assumed. She never showed the slightest effort toward reformation after their occurrence. On each occasion of Napoleon's demand for her bills there was a great display of fear on the part of Josephine. Bourrienne describes the first in 1800. The First Consul

dresses, 136 robes, 20 cashmere shawls, 73 corsets, 48 pieces of cloth, 87 hats, 71 pairs of silk stockings, 980 pairs of gloves, 520 pairs of shoes.

had ordered his secretary to discover the amount of the liabilities. "Let her confess all," he said. "I want to have done with it. But don't pay without showing me all these rascals' accounts. They are a pack of thieves." Bourrienne went to Josephine. "No, no," she cried, "I can't confess all. It is too much; I will say half. He will make a terrible scene. Oh, I am so afraid!" Bourrienne's arguments in favour of clearing all off at once were useless. "No, it is impossible," she repeated. "I think I owe twelve hundred thousand francs. I will declare six hundred thousand, that will be enough for the present. I will pay the rest out of my savings." Bonaparte was so violent, and she could not bear his explosions of wrath!

To appreciate the "violence" of Napoleon we may refer to the scene in 1806. Noticing that Josephine had been for some time in a tearful state, the Emperor this time approached Duroc, asking him to discover what were the debts which must be the cause of the tears. Duroc extracted from Josephine that she owed four hundred thousand francs. "Oh," said Duroc, "the Emperor thought it was eight hundred thousand." "No, I swear it is not—

but, if I must tell you, it is six hundred thousand." "And you are quite certain this is all?" "Quite!" Duroc announced to his master the result of his conversation. Waiting until dinner-time that night, the Emperor allowed Josephine to seat herself and then went up behind her chair and whispered in her ear: "So, madame, you have debts! A million francs of debts!" "No, sire, I swear that I have only six hundred thousand francs' worth." "Only! So that seems a mere trifle to you?" Josephine, who had already begun to weep at the first word, was now sobbing loudly. Napoleon walked round to her other ear and said in it: "Come, Josephine, my little one, don't cry. Cheer up!" And the debts were paid.

When making the final settlement at the time of the divorce and paying out the fourteen hundred thousand (in the form of an advance out of future income, it is true), Napoleon endeavoured to prevent the possibility of future insolvency by putting in to superintend the wardrobe expenditure a certain Mme. Hamelin, who had been in the household of the Princess Pauline. There was also appointed to look

after the budget in general a male *intendant* in the person of M. Pierlot, who was to see that not more than twelve hundred thousand francs were spent in the year, of which one hundred thousand might be spent on toilet—one-eleventh of Josephine's average outlay on this item since she had been Empress! Can Napoleon have supposed that the stipulated sum would not be exceeded? The result was as might have been expected. Josephine's promises to save out of her abundant income went for nothing. She had never done more than talk of saving at any time in her life. Mme. Hamelin only encouraged her to spend more and was dismissed by Napoleon's orders. Pierlot, who had a banking business, neglected it in order to attend to Josephine's affairs and went bankrupt. Their successors could not keep down the debts. In 1811 Josephine again owed a million francs, and Napoleon was writing to her of the necessity of saving a million and a half a year to leave to her grandchildren. "Look after your affairs and do not give to whoever wants to take from you. If you wish to please me, let me know that you have a large balance. Think what a bad opinion

I should have of you if I knew you were in debt with an income of three millions." This he did know, for in November of the same year he granted an additional million for Josephine's dowry and requested Mollien, Minister of the Treasury, to see the new *intendant*, Montlivault, and to insist upon a regulation of the Empress's affairs. After making his report, Mollien was summoned to Napoleon's presence to discuss the economies which had been decided upon. The Emperor was very firm in his insistence that Josephine must no longer rely on him to pay her debts. The fortune of her family must not depend upon him. "I am mortal, more so than other men," he added in a low tone. But when Mollien described his interviews with the Empress herself and how she had wept at them, Napoleon cried: "Oh, but you should not have made her weep!" When we read this anecdote in Méneval's Memoirs it is rather instructive to recall Josephine's reply to her friends' advice to confess all her debts: "No, no, *he* will kill me!"

At her death in 1814 Josephine left debts amounting to nearly three million francs—2,484,813 actually owed, with another half

million promised in dowries and pensions. Against this M. Masson ¹ reckons up the contents of Malmaison, Navarre, and Prégny as worth four million at the utmost. In cash there remained less than 60,000 francs. Legend has made Josephine die worth very varying sums. If Barry O'Meara is to be believed, Napoleon himself said eighteen million francs. Granted that he ignored the outstanding debts, what value can he have attached to the real estate, the three châteaux in France and the Tascher property at Trois-Ilets, Martinique? As with so many of his statements at Saint-Helena, however, it would be unwise to pay too much attention to what Napoleon said, with an eye to posterity, about Josephine's financial position.

This digression on the subject of her debts has been rather long, but the matter is of no little importance in the consideration of Josephine's character as a whole; and her perpetual suspension on the verge of bankruptcy bound her in a peculiar way to the man who was the source of her money. Some did not hesitate to say that Napoleon liked her to be in debt because it made her utterly dependent on him!

¹ " Joséphine Répudiée," 385.

To return to the subject of Josephine's mental equipment, she owed, as we have seen, nothing to education, for she had none except what acquaintance with life gave her. Some would deny her natural intelligence and leave her to retain her hold over Napoleon entirely by means of her sensual attraction. This seems unreasonable. Without intelligence she could not have kept Napoleon hers so long, with her charms constantly on the wane, and after he had several times almost made up his mind to repudiate her. Without intelligence, too, she could not have defeated the machinations of almost the whole of the Bonaparte family, having herself not a single ally to help her unless we count her children Eugène and Hortense. Talleyrand denied her the gift of that untranslatable word *esprit*, saying that she did "superlatively well without it"; but he could not have denied her cleverness when she added him to the list of enemies whom she had beaten.

Whatever it was which enabled her to gain her victories, it certainly was not moral strength, as it is hardly necessary to insist. She was not honest, although her impulsiveness was often mistaken for sincerity. Reference is not made

to single acts of dishonesty, such as the acceptance of bribes from Fouché or of the money which Berthier diverted for her from the funds intended for the sufferers in the military hospitals in Italy, or other instances which almost force one to think that she preferred underhand means of filling her purse, although she had the most generous keeper who ever showered his gold on a fantastically extravagant woman. But her whole life was permeated by dissimulation. Napoleon summed up this characteristic tersely when he said: "Her weapon is the negative. Her first instinct, her first word is No; and this No is not exactly a falsehood, it is a precaution, a simple act of defence." A dissembler from childhood, Josephine has been called by some of her critics. Certainly from the moment when she first landed in France up to the time when she met Napoleon Bonaparte she had a thorough training in deceit. In the Revolution it was a necessary aid for the preservation of life, and the lessons of that period were never forgotten. It may well have seemed to her that she could not afford to forget them when she saw the forces arrayed against her as Napoleon's wife. So much

excuse we must make, that she was a weak woman, fighting first for her life against the enemies of all "aristocrats"; and then for her position against those who hated her for robbing them of their brother and disdained no means of doing her harm.

From dissimulation to diplomacy is but a short step, and Josephine cannot be denied the possession of considerable diplomatic ability. To mention two of the chief instances of its display; it was a stroke of genius, in the great scene after the return from Egypt, to appeal to Napoleon's consideration for her innocent children; and the way in which she forced Napoleon, without any known direct prayer, to marry her according to the rites of the Church is no less clever. And how often do not her tears seem but a form of diplomacy—a very becoming form, too, in her husband's opinion? All her admirers and many of her enemies have credited her with tact, and it is obvious that in many situations she required very great tact to extricate herself as she did. "She always knew the best thing to say or to do at need," says Méneval, who was nevertheless without any illusions as to her superior mind or educa-

tion. It was "her exquisite politeness and her wide acquaintance with society," according to him, which prompted her to the right speech and action.

She was "gentle and kind, affable and indulgent to all, without respect to persons," says the same critic, and every one else agrees with him as to Josephine's affability. At no period in her life did she hedge herself in against those whose interests or even curiosity brought them to her. She never, of her own initiative, insisted on the fact that she was Empress, but on the contrary was disposed to extend a friendly welcome to all comers. She might have adopted her brother-in-law Jerome's saying about kingship, that to him it meant the power to give. For it must not be supposed that the whole of her vast expenditure was devoted to the mere gratification of her senses, that she spent all her money and incurred all her debts in surrounding herself with jewels, dresses, pictures, statues, furniture, flowers, strange pets, and all the other objects which appealed to her tastes. She had in her lifetime and left after her death a great reputation for generosity and benevolence. As early as 1796 we hear

the saying : “ She is good to the poor.” The Josephine of legend is emphatically *la bonne Joséphine*, the kind and charitable Empress. She was indeed always giving, lavishly, indiscriminately. She could never refuse a request. Sometimes, through the very multiplicity of her promises, she might forget to fulfil. But no one was ever more accessible to demands. Money, presents of clothes, pensions to the old, dowries to girls, toys and sweets to children—all alike she distributed without a grudging thought. The great flaw in this generosity is that it was fortuitous and unreasoning. She did not go out to look for deserving recipients of her charity. Her Lady of Honour had forty thousand francs a year to distribute in alms, and Josephine took no pains to inquire whether it was given to those really in want. Similarly the presents, dowries, and pensions were bestowed almost at haphazard on those who surrounded her or came in contact with her. Similarly, again, her influence in the State was used on behalf of those who wrote to her, especially if they were members of the old aristocracy, without regard to the petitioners’ real worth. She acquired her reputation for

bonté, not for active beneficence, so much as because she had the means of giving without stint and hated to refuse.

Coupled with the readiness to grant the requests of all who might invoke her as a friend was the inability to hate which we have noticed several times earlier in this book. Lucien Bonaparte was perhaps the person against whom she longest cherished hostile thoughts, yet she interceded even for him, if in vain, on the morning of her Coronation. Her sisters-in-law she certainly did not love, but we know of no active injury done by her to them, while they did many to her. Against the women who robbed her of love which she might claim as hers alone she showed a singular absence of resentment. She dowered Alexandre de Beauharnais's illegitimate daughter by one who had done all that was in her power to hurt Josephine. She made friends of the Comtesse Walewska and Mme. Gazzani, not to mention any others for whom Napoleon displayed a fancy. She would doubtless have been prepared to be a friend to Marie-Louise, had the younger Empress not been terrified at the very thought of meeting her.

If she could not hate, she was also accused

of being incapable of loving. Leaving aside for the moment the question of her relations with Napoleon, we find such a charge unjustified unless we are prepared to narrow down the meaning of the word "love" so as to make it exclude all selfish feelings. With regard to her own family, we have already seen that Josephine was, on the evidence of letters stretching over a period of thirty years, a demonstratively affectionate mother. As a grandmother she was still more fond. Was this all insincere? Son, daughter, and her favourite grandson did not think so. There is some mystery about her relations with her mother, since Mme. Tascher de la Pagerie preferred to spend nearly seventeen years in solitude at Trois-Ilets rather than come to Paris where her daughter was; and her death passed almost unnoticed. But it would be unjust to draw any conclusions where we have no evidence as to a quarrel. To members of the Tascher family in general Josephine was a good kinswoman. She behaved generously to the Beauharnais. Her first husband certainly had no cause for complaint, seeing that after his most villainous conduct to her in life she taught his

children to look up to his memory as that of a noble patriot.

It may be granted that Josephine's love was rather of the diffused than of the concentrated kind, that she loved too many things to love anything overmuch. Flowers, animals, children, young and amusing persons, and a host of inanimate things claimed her regard so strongly that her heart was another Malmaison in the incongruous variety of objects for which it found room. And this perhaps is another way of saying that Josephine's affections were a vigorous expression of her self-love.

We come now to the subject of the bond between Napoleon and Josephine, through which it is that she has attracted so much attention which would not otherwise be hers. No one has ventured to question the fact of Napoleon's love for his wife, in face of the marvellous letters from Italy and his inability to sever himself from her for ten years after his return from Egypt. The revelation of his infidelities to her, so carefully investigated by M. Masson in his "Napoléon et les Femmes," fails to shake the belief in that love; because, although it is obvious that his discovery of her

treachery in the early years of their marriage made him refuse henceforward to close his eyes to all other sensual attractions than those which she offered him, he never ceased to cherish above all the Josephine of the rue Chantereine in 1796. She remained to him the type of womanhood with whom all other specimens compared poorly. She was to him the model of aristocratic good breeding, of perfect deportment, of proper dress. Did not even his admiration for rouge—and tears—come from Josephine? After the storm which followed his return from Egypt, too, she became to him, though no longer ignorant of her failings, the pattern of what a wife should be to her husband. In spite of occasional outbreaks, whether caused by jealousy or by consciousness of debts, her temper was wonderfully even. She never kept him waiting, even on the plea of requiring time for her toilet. She hastened to anticipate his wishes and inculcated the same conduct in her children. She went cheerfully through the most arduous social duties with a gracious smile on her face and an appropriate word in her mouth for all. A lover of idleness and a wretched traveller, she took long and

uncomfortable journeys to meet the princes and princesses whom he desired to bind to France. She exerted herself tirelessly to conciliate to Napoleon all whom she could influence at home or abroad, extorting from him the admiring exclamation : " I win battles, Josephine wins me hearts ! " And, lastly, he believed that she had grown to love him. Much as the scenes of jealousy enraged him at the time, he could not help but treat them on reflection as a tribute to himself, and forgive her who resented so much the attentions which he paid to other women. So persuaded was he of Josephine's love that on one occasion, discussing the question of divorce, he cried : " She will not resist, she will die." Subsequent events only confirmed his belief. We have seen the doctor's stammering explanation of the cause of Josephine's death and heard the exclamation of the Emperor : " Good woman, good Josephine ! She loved me truly." With this firm conviction he himself died at Saint-Helena seven years later.

Great pains have been taken to prove both that he was right and that he was wrong. When the name of Bonaparte had ceased to be a byword and Josephine's " little Oui-Oui " had

grown into Napoleon III., the writers who took on themselves to rehabilitate the great personages of the First Empire devoted special care to the new Emperor's grandmother, and Josephine was painted as the sorrowful martyr to necessities of State. She was the fondly loving wife repudiated, not without a suspicion of harshness, after fourteen years of faithful wedlock. Since the end of the Second Empire Napoleonic writers have approached the subject less fettered, and in their admiration for the great Emperor have gone far in the other direction, blaming him only for not getting rid of Josephine earlier, and almost denying her any attachment to him except that of self-interest. Justice, as usual, seems to lie between the extremes. Josephine did grow to love the man who made her, and perhaps loved him ultimately with as much love as she was capable of giving. But on him, as on others, as we have suggested, she was incapable of concentrating a great volume of love. That she did not die of grief at his fate, it is unnecessary to insist.

Although it is possible to say that Josephine's love for Napoleon was a growth, it is not possible to trace that growth otherwise than very

vaguely. There may have been a little passion in the rue Chantreine, mostly before the marriage ; but it is not credible that there was any genuine love when " Bonaparte " appeared to his wife " a very brave man " and his letters " droll." Nor during the visit to Italy nor the few months in France previous to the expedition to Egypt can any trace of the feeling be seen. Appreciation of his generosity there undoubtedly was, and a certain pride in his glory. In 1798-9 even self-interest was not strong enough to make Josephine pay any attention to the absent Bonaparte, who after all might never return. It almost seems strange that Gohier's advice—" Divorce ! "—was not taken. From the moment of the return from Egypt, however, every one recognised that a change had come about. Hitherto husband and wife had lived but a very brief while together. Henceforward Josephine was seldom for long away from Napoleon's immediate influence until the campaign against Austria in 1805. And Josephine in Napoleon's presence was a very different woman from Josephine with Napoleon away.¹

¹ M. Masson has an interesting discussion on the point at the end of his " Joséphine Impératrice et Reine." Of the two

She sank under his domination, and as he found rest in her, so she found strength in him. His personality enveloped hers, and there was no more question of her unfaithfulness to him. On the contrary, she now began to watch his conduct with a feeling that was almost the jealousy of love, and of course discovered that she was not altogether without reason for watching. Quarrels and threats of divorce from him followed, though the threats were perhaps scarcely serious. Then came the Empire and the great ceremony at Notre-Dame. Grounds for jealousy still existed, but Josephine, growing older, learnt to be more complacent. She must sacrifice something to retain her hold. Matters became more desperate when little Napoleon-Charles died in May 1807. No child could take his place as heir to the Emperor, who from this time forward began in earnest to consider the question of repudiation, in order

women in Josephine, he says, the woman she was in the Emperor's absence was undoubtedly the true Josephine—"the one who entertained the dealers, the waiting-women, the gardeners; the woman with debts, the pet animals, and the chatter; who lived the life of a mistress most splendidly kept. But it was the other woman whom the public saw, and so well did she play her part that they did not see nor trouble about the other side of her."

that he might have a son of his own. The rest has been told in Chapters XXIV. and XXV. Josephine clung the more desperately to her protector as she saw separation coming, and persuaded herself and the ordinary observer that it was true love which Napoleon was putting away from himself. He believed it, too, and made the sacrifice with every accompaniment which could redound to Josephine's credit and advantage. It was therefore with Napoleon's full connivance that she was able to pose as a martyr, while she on her part made little effort to spare him.

It would be uncharitable to judge harshly a woman in so desperate a plight as was Josephine's ; but it must be confessed that even when her love for her husband was at its highest point, which we may place in the period when she saw she must inevitably lose him, it was a selfish and interested love, which left her free to discuss his failings and his alleged "cruelty" with any one who was willing to act as confidant. All the worst and most unjustifiable reports about Napoleon's morality, inventions of his Royalist enemies, gained currency at Court through Josephine in moments of anger or

despair allowing herself to repeat what some of her scandal-mongering friends had told her—in strictest confidence, of course. She spoke at such times as if she were in delirium ; but unhappily she was sane, and the wife of him whose name she befouled. It is a small matter, in comparison, that she should have made the remark already recorded to her friend Mme. de Rémusat, at the time of the suggestions of divorce following the Peace of Tilsit : “ Who knows of what he is capable and whether he will resist the temptation to put me out of the way ? ”

Nevertheless, although Josephine commenced her life with Napoleon by grossly betraying the most passionate affection of which actual records remain in history ; although her own love which she ultimately developed for him was a strange compound of fascinated submission to a dominating will and an eager clinging to the provider of her riches ; although she robbed him with his servants and discussed him disloyally with his enemies ; although to present a really black picture of his character we need only go to her recorded utterances about him—in spite of all this, we must not forget that Napoleon

never ceased, to the end of his days, to speak of the perfect happiness which she had given him in their life together. If she had been the most devoted and most virtuous of wives, could any husband have said more for her ?

If Josephine has imposed on history, it is plainly because she imposed upon Napoleon, which in itself perhaps is no small feat. We cannot take leave more appropriately of one of the strangest heroines who has ever lived than with those fond words which Napoleon uttered in his gratitude to her memory at Saint-Helena :
“ She was the best woman in France ! ”

THE END

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