father of her children; how could Josephine have hated him, how could her heart, so soft and true, cherish animosity against him?

At the side of her husband's father, and holding her daughter in her arms, Josephine entered Paris. Behind them came a long train of brilliant equipages, of relatives and friends. The passers-by stopped to see the brilliant procession move before them, and to ask what it meant. Some had recognized the viscountess, and they told to others of the sufferings and of the acquittal of the poor young woman; and the people, easily affected and sympathizing, rejoiced in the decision of the Parliament, and with shouts and applause followed the carriage of the young wife.

The marquis, her father-in-law, turned smilingly to Josephine.

"Do you see, my daughter," said he, "what a triumph you enjoy, and how much you are beloved and recognized?"

Josephine bent down toward the little Hortense and kissed her.

"Ah," said she, in a low voice, "we are returning home, but the father of my children will not bid us welcome. For a pressure of his hand, for a kind word from him, I would gladly give the lofty triumph of this hour."

No, Alexandre de Beauharnais did not bid welcome to Josephine in his father's house, which they had occupied together. Ashamed and irritated, he had sped away from Paris, and returned to his regiment at Verdun.

On the arm of the Marquis de Beauharnais, Josephine traversed the apartments in which she had lived with her husband, and which she now saw again as a widow, whom not death but life had separated from her husband. Her father-in-law saw the tears standing in her eyes, and, with the refined sympathy of a sensitive mind, he understood the painful thoughts which agitated the soul of the young wife.



He fondly folded her in his arms, and laid his blessing hand on the head of the little Hortense.

"I have lost my son Alexandre," said he, "but I have found in his stead a daughter. Yes, Josephine, you are and will remain my daughter, and to you and to your children I will be a true father. My son has parted from us, but we remain together in harmony and love, and as long as I live my daughter Josephine will never want a protector."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### TRIANON AND MARIE ANTOINETTE.

WHILST the Viscountess Josephine de Beauharnais, the empress of the future, was living in enforced widowhood, the life of Marie Antoinette, the queen of the present, resembled a serene, golden, sunny dream; her countenance, beaming with youth, beauty, and grace, had never yet been darkened with a cloud; her large blue eyes had not yet been dimmed with tears.

In Fontainebleau, whither Josephine had retired with her father-in-law, who through unfortunate events had lost the greatest part of his fortune—in Fontainebleau lived the future Empress of France in sad monotony; in Versailles, in Trianon, lived the present Queen of France in the dazzling splendor of her glory, of her youth, and of her beauty. In Trianon—this first gift of love from the king to his wife—the Queen of France dreamed life away in a pleasant idyl, in a joyous pastoral amusement; there, she tried to forget that she was queen, that is to say, that she was the slave of etiquette; there she tried to indemnify herself for the tediousness, the emptiness, the heartlessness of the great festivals in the Tuileries and in Versailles.

In Trianon, Marie Antoinette desired to be the domestic wife, the pleasant, youthful woman, as in the Tuileries and at Versailles she was the proud and lofty queen. Marie Antoinette felt her days obscured by the splendors of royalty; the crown weighed heavily on her beautiful head, which seemed made for a crown of myrtle and roses; life's earnestness had not yet cast its breath on those rosy cheeks and robbed of youth's charm the smile on those crimson lips.

And why should not Marie Antoinette have smiled and been joyous? Every thing shone round about her; every thing seemed to promise an enduring harvest of felicity, for the surface of France was calm and bright, and the queen's vision had not yet been made keen enough by experience to penetrate below this shining surface and see the precipices already hidden underneath.

These precipices were yet covered with flowers, and the skies floating above them seemed yet cloudless. The French people appeared to retain yet for the royal family that enthusiastic devotedness which they had manifested for centuries; they fondly proclaimed to the queen, whenever she appeared, their affection, their admiration; they were not weary with the expressions of their rapture and their worship, and Marie Antoinette was not weary of listening to these jubilant manifestations with which she was received in the theatre, on the streets, in the gardens of the Tuileries, on the terraces of Versailles; she was not weary of returning thanks with a friendly nod or with a gracious smile.

All the Parisians seemed still to be, as once, at the arrival of the Dauphin, they had been called by the Baron de Vesenval, "the queen's lovers," and also to rival one another in manifesting their allegiance.

Even the fish-women of Paris shared the general enthusiasm; and when, in 1781, the queen had given to her husband a son, and to his people a future monarch, the ladies



of "the Halls" were amongst the most enthusiastic friends of the queen. They even came to Versailles to congratulate the royal couple on the dauphin's birth, to salute the young dauphin as the heir to the crown of France, and to sing under the window of the king some songs, one of which so pleased the king that oftentimes afterward, in his quiet and happy hours, he used to sing a verse of it with a smile on his lip. This verse, which even Marie Antoinette sang, ran thus:

"Ne craignez pas, cher papa,
D' voir augmenter vot' famille,
Le bon Dieu z'y pourvoira:
Faits-en tant qu' Versailles en fourmille;
Yeût-il cent Bourbons cheu nos
Ya du pain, du laurier pour tous." *

In Trianon, Marie Antoinette passed her happiest hours and days; there, the queen changed herself into a shepherdess; there, vanished from her the empty splendors of purple and ermine, of etiquette and ceremonial; there, she enjoyed life in its purity, in its innocency, in its naturalness; such was the ideal Marie Antoinette wished to realize in Trianon.

A simple dress of white muslin, a light kerchief of gauze, a straw hat with a gayly-colored ribbon, such was the attire of the queen and of the princesses whom Marie Antoinette invited. For the only etiquette which prevailed at Trianon was this: that no one from the court, even princes or princesses, should come to Trianon without having received an invitation from the queen to that effect. Even the king submitted to this ceremonial, and had expressly promised his consort never to come to Trianon without an invitation, and, so as to please the queen, no sooner did she announce her intention of retiring to her country-residence, than he

* Madame de Campan, "Histoire de Marie Antoinette," vol. i., p. 218.

was always the first who hastened to obtain the favor of an invitation.

In Trianon, Louis ceased to be king as well as Marie Antoinette ceased to be queen. There Louis XVI. was but the farmer of the lady of the castle; the Count d'Artois was the miller, and the learned Count de Provence, the schoolmaster. For each of them had been erected in the gardens of Trianon a separate house suited to their respective avocations.

The farmer Louis had his farm-house built in Swiss style, with a balcony of finely-carved wood at the gable-end, and with stalls attached to the house, and where bellowed the stately red cows of Switzerland; behind the house was a small garden in which the variegated convolvulus and the daisy shed their fragrance.

The Count d'Artois had, near the stream which flowed through the park, his miller's house, with an enormous wheel, made of wooden spokes joined together, and which moved lustily in the water, and adorned the clear brook with wavelets of foam.

The Count de Provence had, under the shadow of a mulberry-tree, his house, with a large school-room in it; and oftentimes the whole court-society were converted into scholars of both sexes, who took their seats on the benches of the school-room, whilst the Count de Provence, in a long coat with lead buttons and with an immense rod in his hand, ascended the cathedra and delivered to his school-children a humorous and piquant lecture, all sparkling with wit.

The princesses also had in this "grove of Paradise," as Marie Antoinette called the woods of Trianon, their cottages, where they milked cows, made butter, and searched for eggs in the hens' nests. In the midst of all these cottages and Swiss houses stood the cottage of the farming Marie Antoinette; it was the finest and the most beautiful one of all, adorned with vases full of fragrant blossoms and surrounded



by flowering plants and by cozy bowers of verdure. This cottage was the highest delight of the queen's life, the enchanting toy of her happiness. Even the little castle of Trianon, however simple and modest, seemed too splendid for the taste of the pastoral queen. For in Trianon one was always reminded that the lady of this castle was a queen; there, servants were in livery; there, officials and names and titles were to be found, even when etiquette was forbidden entrance into the halls of the little castle of Trianon. Marie Antoinette was no more queen there, it is true, but she was the lady of the palace to whom the highest respect was shown, and who therefore had been constrained expressly and strictly to order that at her entrance into the drawing-rooms the ladies would not interrupt the piece begun on the piano, nor stand up if seated at their embroidery, and that the gentlemen would keep on undisturbed their billiard-party or their game at trictrac.

But in her cottage all rank disappeared; there, was no distinction; there, ceased the glory of name and title, and no sooner was the castle abandoned for the cottages than each named the other with some Arcadic, pastoral appellation, and each busied himself with his rural avocations. How lustily the laughter, how merrily the song sounded from these cottages amid these bowers and groves; how the countenance of the farming-lady was lighted up with happiness and joy; with what delight rested upon her the eye of the farmer Louis, who in his blue blouse, with a straw hat on his head, with a rosy, fleshy, good-natured face, was exactly fitted for his part, and who found it no difficult task to hide under the farmer's garment the purple of the king!

How often was Marie Antoinette seen in her simple white dress, her glowing countenance shaded by a straw hat, bounding through the garden as light as a gazelle, and going from the barn to the milk-room, followed by the company she had invited to drink of her milk and eat of her

fresh eggs! How often, when the farmer Louis had secreted himself in a grove for the sake of reading, how often was he discovered there by the queen, torn away from his book and drawn to a *déjeuner* on the grass! When that was over, and Louis had gone back to his book, Marie Antoinette hastened to her cows to see them milked, or she went into the rocking-boat to fish, or else reposed on the lawn, busy as a peasant, with her spindle.

But this quiet occupation detained not long the lively, spirited farming-lady; with a loud voice, she called to her maids or companions from the cottages, and then began those merry, unrestrained amusements which the queen had introduced into society, and which since then have been introduced not only into the drawing-rooms of the upper classes, but also into the more austere circles of the wealthy burghers.

Then the queen with her court played at blindman's bluff, at pampam, or at a game invented by the Duke de Chartres, the future Duke Philippe d'Orleans, Egalité, and which game was called "descamper," a sort of hide-and-seek amusement, in which the ladies hid themselves in the shady bushes and groves, to be there discovered by the gentlemen, and then to endeavor by flight to save themselves, for if once caught and seized they had to purchase their liberty with a kiss.

When evening came all left the cottages for the little castle, and the pastoral recreations gave way to the higher enjoyments of refined society. Marie Antoinette was not in the castle of Trianon queen again, but she was not either the simple lady of the farm, she was the lady of the castle, and—the first amateur in the theatrical company which twice a week exhibited their pieces in the theatre of Trianon.

These theatrical performances were quite as much the queen's delight as her pastoral occupations in her farm-



cottages, and Marie Antoinette was unwearied in learning and studying her parts. She had chosen for teachers two pensioned actors, Caillot and Dazincourt, who had to come every day to Trianon to teach to the noble group of actors the small operas, vaudevilles, and dramas, which had been chosen for representation, and in which the queen naturally always played the part of first amateur, while the princesses, the wives of the Counts de Provence and Artois, the two Countesses de Polignac, undertook the other parts, even those of gentlemen, when the two brothers of the king, the only male members of this theatrical company, could not assume all the gentlemen's parts.

At first the audience at these representations was very limited. Only the king, the princes and the princesses of the royal household, not engaged in the performance, constituted the audience; but afterward it was found that to encourage the actors a little, a larger audience was needed; then the boxes were filled with the governesses of the princesses, the queen's waiting-women, whose sisters and daughters with a few other select ladies had been invited.

It was natural that those who had been thus preferred, and who enjoyed the privilege of seeing the Queen of France, the princes and princesses, appear as actors, should be full of admiration and applause at the talents displayed by the royal troupe; and as they alone formed the select audience, whose presence had for object to animate the *artistes*, they had also assumed the duty to excite and to vitalize the zeal and the fire of the players by their enthusiasm and by their liberal praises.

This applause of a grateful public blinded the royal actors as to their real merits, and excited in them the ambition to exhibit their artistic talents before a larger audience and to be admired. Consequently, the queen granted to the officers of the lifeguard and to the masters of the king's stalls and to their brothers, admittance into the theatre; the gentle-

men and ladies of the court had seats in the gilt boxes; a larger number of ladies were invited, and soon from all sides came requests for tickets of admission to the theatrical performances in the Trianon.

The same privileges which had been allowed to a few could not be, and it was not desirable that they should be, granted to all; those who were purposely refused revenged themselves of this refusal by an unsparing criticism on the performers and by bitter sarcasm at the Queen of France, who so far forgot her dignity as to play comedies before her subjects, and who played her part not always in such a manner as to give to a sharp criticism no reason for blame.

The queen possessed, it is true, the desire, but not the ability, to be an actress or a songstress. When she played the part of a comedian, no one felt tempted to laugh; but contrariwise it might often happen that, when her part was tragical, impressive and touching even to tears, the faces of her auditors brightened with involuntary laughter.

Once even it happened that a person from the audience, when the queen had not yet left the stage, cried aloud, and perhaps with the intention of being heard by her: "One must confess that royal acting is bad acting!"

Though she understood the words, yet the smile on her lips vanished not away; and as the Countess Diana de Polignac wished to persuade her to allow the impertinent one who had spoken these words, to be sought out and punished, the queen, shrugging her shoulders, answered: "My friend, I say as Madame de Maintenon: 'I am upon the stage, and must therefore be willing to be applauded or hissed.'"

Yes, she had to endure the applause or the hissing. Unfortunately, the number of those who hissed grew every day. The queen had provoked public expression since she bade it defiance. On the day she banished etiquette from its watchful duty at the apartments of the Queen of France, the public expression with its train of slanders and maliciousness



entered in through the open portals. The queen was blamed for her theatricals as well as for her simple, unadorned toilet, yet she was imitated in these two things, as even before the costly and luxurious toilet, the high head-gears of the queen, and also blindman's buff and descamper, had been imitated. Every woman now wanted such a simple *négligée*, such a headdress, such a feather as Marie Antoinette. As once before, Madame Bertin, the celebrated milliner of the queen, had been circumvented to furnish a pattern of the queen's *coiffure*, so now all the ladies rushed upon her in flocks to procure the small caps, fichus, and mantelets, after the queen's model. The robes with long trains, the court-dresses of heavy silk, jewels and gold ornaments, were on a sudden despised; every thing which could add brilliancy and dignity to the toilet was banished, the greatest simplicity and *nonchalance* were now the fashion; every lady strove, if possible, to resemble a shepherdess of Watteau, and it was soon impossible to distinguish a duchess from an actress.

Not only the ladies but also the gentlemen were carried away by this flood of novelty. They gave up the boots with red heels, the embroidered garments, as already before they had given up laces, bandelets, gold fringes, and diamond buttons on the hats; they put on simple coats of cloth as the burgher and the man of the people wore; they abandoned their equipages, with their brilliant armorial trappings and the golden liveries, and found satisfaction in promenading the streets, with cane in hand, and with boots instead of buckled shoes.

It is true these street promenadings of the nobility were not oftentimes without inconvenience and molestation. As without the insignia of their rank and position they mixed with the society of the streets, entered into taverns and *cafés*, the people took them for what they seemed to be, for their equals, and instead of respectfully making way for them, the people claimed as much attention from them as

they themselves were willing to give. Often enough disputes and scuffles took place between the disguised nobleman and the man of the people, the laborer, or the commissionnaire, and at such experiments of hand to hand the victory was not to the nobleman, but to the fist of the man of the people.

The novelty of such scenes excited the fastidious aristocracy; it became a sort of passion to mix with the people, to frequent the *cabarets*, to strike some bargain at trade, to be the hero of a fist-fight, even if it ended by the stout workmen throwing down the aristocrats who had despised them. To be thrown down was no more considered by the nobility as a disgrace, and they applauded these affrays as once they had applauded duelling.

The aristocracy mixed with the people, adopted their manners and usages, even much of their mode of thinking, of their democratic opinions, and, by divesting themselves of their external dignity, of their halo, the nobility threw down the barrier of separation which stood between them and the democracy; that respect and esteem which the man of the people had hitherto maintained toward the nobleman vanished away.

The principle of equality, which was to have such fatal consequences for France, arose from the folly of the aristocracy; and Marie Antoinette was the one who, with her taste for simplicity, with her opposition to etiquette and ceremony, had called this principle into life.

Not only was the queen imitated in her simplicity, she was also imitated in her love of comedy. These theatrical amusements of the queen were a subject of reproach, and yet these private recreations of Marie Antoinette were the fashion of the day. The taste for theatrical representations made its way into all classes of society; soon there was no nobleman, no banker, not even a respectable, well-to-do merchant, who had not in his house a small theatre, and



who, with his family and friends, endeavored not to emulate on his own narrow stage the manners of the celebrated actors.

Before these days, a nobleman would have considered himself insulted and dishonored if he had been supposed to have become a comedian, or even to have assumed a comedian's garb, were it but in the home-circle. The queen by her example had now destroyed this prepossession, and it was now so much *bon ton* to act a comedy that even men of gravity, even the first magistrate of Paris, could so much forget the dignity of position as to commit to memory and even to act some of the parts of a buffoon.*

It was also soon considered to be highly fashionable to set one's self against the prejudice which had been hitherto fostered against actors; and, whereas the queen took lessons in singing from Garat, the opera-singer, and even sang duets with her, she threw down the wall of partition which had hitherto separated the *artistes* of the stage from good society.

Unfortunate queen, who, with the best qualities of the heart, was preparing her own ruin; who understood not that the freedom and license which she herself granted, would soon throw on the roof of the Tuileries the firebrand which reduced to dust and ashes the throne of the Bourbons!—unfortunate queen, who in her modesty would so gladly forget her exaltation and her majesty, and who thereby taught her subjects to make light of majesty and to despise the throne!

She saw not yet the abyss opening under her feet; the flowers of Trianon hid it from her view! She heard not the distant mutterings of the public mind, which, like the raging wave of the storm, swelled up nearer and nearer the throne to crush it one day under the howling thunders of the unshackled elements of the unloosed rage of the people!

* Montjoie, "Histoire de Marie Antoinette, Reine de France."

The skies, arching over the fragrant blossoms of the charming Trianon, and over the cottages of the farming queen, were yet serene and cloudless, and the voice of public opinion was yet drowned in the joyous laughter which echoed from the cottages of Trianon, or in the sweet harmonies which waved in the concert-hall, when the queen, with Garat, or with the Baron de Vaudreuil, the most welcome favorite of the ladies, and the most accomplished courtier of his day, sang her duets.

Repose and peace prevailed yet in Trianon, and the loyal subjects of the King of France made their pilgrimages to Trianon, there to admire the idyls of the queen and to watch for the favorable opportunity of espying the queen, Marie Antoinette, in her rustic costume, with a basket of eggs on her arm, or the spindle in hand, and to be greeted by her with a salutation, a friendly word. For Marie Antoinette in Trianon was only the lady of the mansion, or the farming-lady—so much so, that she had allowed the very last duties of etiquette, which separated the subject from the queen, to be abandoned, that even when with her gay company she was in Trianon, the gates of the park and of the castle were not closed to visitors, but were opened to any one who had secured from the keeper a card of admission; the benefit arising from these cards was applied by order of the queen to the relief of the poor of Versailles. It is true, one condition of small importance was attached, "by order of the queen," to the obtaining of such a card. It was necessary to belong to the nobility, or to the higher magistracy, so as to be entitled to purchase a card of admission into the Trianon, and this sole insignificant condition contained the germ of much evil and of bitter hatred. The merchant, the *épicier*, was conscious of a bitter insult in this order, which banished him from Trianon, which made it impossible for him to satisfy his curiosity, and to see the queen as a shepherdess, and the king as a farmer. This



order only whetted more and more the hatred and the contempt for the preferred classes, for the aristocrats, and turned the most important class of the population, the burgesses, into enemies of the queen. For it was the queen who had given this order which kept away from Trianon the tradesmen; it was the queen alone who ruled in Trianon: and, to vent vengeance on the queen's order, she was blamed for assuming a right belonging only to the King of France. Only he, the king, was entitled to give laws to France, only he could set on the very front of the law this seal: "DE PAR LE ROI."

And now the queen wanted to assume this privilege. In the castles of pleasure presented by the king to the queen, in Trianon as well as in St. Cloud, was seen at the entrance of the gardens a tablet, containing the regulations under which admission was granted to the public, and these two tablets began with the formula, "DE PAR LA REINE!" This unfortunate expression excited the ill-will and the anger of all France; every one felt himself injured, every one was satisfied to see therein an attack on the integrity of the monarchy, on the sovereignty of the king.

"It is no more the king alone who enacts laws," they said, "but the queen also assumes this right; she makes use of the formalities of the state, she issues laws without the approbation of the Parliament. The queen wants to place our king aside and despoil us of our rights, so as to take the king's place!"

And these complaints, these reproaches became so vehement, so loud, that their echoes resounded in the chambers of the king, so that even one of the ministers could make observations to the king on that subject, and say: "It is certainly immoral and impolitic for a queen of France to own castles for her own private use" *

* Campan, "Mémoires," vol. i., p. 274.

The good Louis therefore ventured to speak to his consort on this subject, and to ask of her to remove this expression which gave so much offence, and which had so violently excited the public sentiment.

But the pure heart of Marie Antoinette rebelled against such a supposition; her pride was stirred up that she, a queen, the daughter of the Cæsars, should make concession to public opinion; that she should submit to this imaginary and invisible power, which dared despise her as a queen, which she recognized not and would not recognize!

This power, the public opinion, stood yet behind Marie Antoinette as an invisible, an unobserved phantom, which soon was to be transformed into a cruel monster, whose giant hand would pitilessly crush the happiness and the peace of the queen.

The prayers and expostulations of the king were in vain. Marie Antoinette would not bow to the public sentiment; she would not depart from her regulations, she would not strike off her "*De par la reine*," for the sake of "*De par le peuple.*"

"My name is there in its right place," said she, with a countenance beaming with resolution and pride; "these gardens and castles are my property, and I can very well issue orders in them, without interfering with state rights."

And the "*De par la reine*" remained on the regulation-tablets in Trianon as well as in St. Cloud; and the people, who, through birth or through official position, were not entitled to enter Trianon, came thither at least to read the tablets of rules at the gate of entrance, and to fill up their hearts with scorn and contempt, and to utter loud curses against this presumptuous and daring "*De par la reine.*"

And this woman, whose pride and imperiousness kept away and scorned away the burgesses from the gates of Trianon, came to Trianon there to rest from the unbending



majesty of her sovereignty, and she herself used to say to her ladies, with her own enchanting smile, "To forget that she was queen."

The numberless fairy-tales related about the enchanted castle of the queen had found their way to Fontainebleau, and had been re-echoed in the quiet, lonely house where lived the Marquis de Beauharnais and his family. The marquis, always extremely attentive to procure for his beloved daughter-in-law some distraction and some recreation, proposed to Josephine to visit this Trianon, which furnished so much material for admiration and slander, and to make thither with a few friends a pleasure excursion.

Josephine gladly accepted the invitation; she longed for diversion and society. Her young, glowing heart had been healed and strengthened after the deep wound which the ever-beloved husband had inflicted; she had submitted to her fate; she was a divorced woman, but Parliament had by its judgment kept her honor free from every shadow; public opinion had pronounced itself in her favor; the love of her parents, of the father of him who had so shamefully accused her, so cruelly deserted her, endeavored to make compensation for what she had lost. Josephine could not trouble, with her sorrows, with her sad longings of soul, those who so much busied themselves in cheering her up. She had, therefore, so mastered herself as to appear content, as to dry her tears; and her youth, the freshness and elasticity of her mind, had come to the help of her efforts. She had at first smiled through effort, she soon did it from the force of youthful pleasure; she had at first repressed her tears by the power of her will, soon her tears were dried up and her eyes irradiated again the fire of youth and hope, of the hope once more to win her husband's heart, to return her two graceful and beloved children to their father, whom their youth needed, for whom every evening she raised to the God of love the prayers which their mother with

low, trembling voice and tears in her eyes made them say after her.

Josephine, then, in company with her aunt Madame de Renaudin and with her father-in-law the Marquis de Beauharnais, undertook this pleasure-excursion to Trianon. The sight of these glorious parks, these gardens so artistically laid out, charmed her and filled her with the sweet reminiscences of the loved home, of the beautiful gardens in Martinique, which she herself with her slaves had cultivated, in which she had planted those beautiful flowers whose liveliness of color and whose fragrance of blossom were here in hot-houses so much praised. The love of plants and flowers had ever remained fresh amid the storms and sorrows which in the last years had passed over her heart, and oftentimes she had sought in the study of botany forgetfulness and refreshment. With a vivacity and a joyfulness such as had not been seen in her for a long time, Josephine wandered about this beautiful park, these hot-houses and gardens, and, transported with joy and admiration, she exclaimed: "Oh, how happy must the queen be to call this paradise her own!"

The sound of approaching voices interrupted her in her observations and in her admiration, which, perchance, was not entirely free from envy. Through the foliage of the trees was seen a large company approaching the queen's farm-house, before which stood Josephine with her escort. At the curve of the path near the grove where Josephine stood, appeared a woman. A white muslin dress, not expanded by the stiff, ceremonious hoop-petticoat, but falling down in ample folds, wrapped up her tall, noble figure, a small lace kerchief covered the beautiful neck, and in part the splendid shoulders. The deep-blond unpowdered hair hung in heavy, curly locks on either side of the rosy cheeks; the head was covered with a large, round straw hat, adorned with long, streaming silk ribbons; on the arm, partly



covered with a black knit glove, hung an ornamented woven basket, which was completely filled with eggs.

"The queen!" murmured Josephine, trembling within herself, and, frightened at this unexpected meeting, she wanted to withdraw behind the grove, in the hope of being unnoticed by the farmer's wife passing by.

But Marie Antoinette had already seen her, and on her beautiful, smiling countenance was not for a moment expressed either surprise or concern at this unexpected meeting with uninvited strangers. She was so accustomed to see curiosity-seekers in her lovely Trianon, and to meet them, disturbed not in the least her unaffected serenity. A moment only she stood still, to allow her followers, the Duchesses de Polignac, the Princess de Lamballe, and the two Counts de Coigny, to draw near; then lightly and smilingly she walked toward the house near which Josephine bewildered and blushing stood, whilst the marquis bowed profoundly and reverentially.

The queen, who was about to pass by and enter into the house, stood still. Her large dark-blue eye was for a moment fixed with questioning expression upon Josephine, then a smile illumined her beautiful countenance. She had recognized the Viscountess de Beauharnais, though she had seen her only twice. Although, through her husband's rank and station, Josephine was entitled to appear at court, yet she had always, with all the retreating anxiety of inexperienced youth, endeavored to evade the solemnity of an official presentation. The young, lively, unaffected creole had cherished an invincible horror for the stiff court-etiquette, for the ceremonial court-dress of gold brocade, with the court-mantle strictly embroidered after the established pattern, and which terminated in a long, heavy train, for the majestic head-gear of feathers, flowers, laces, and veils, all towering up nearly a yard high, and, above all things, for those rules and laws which regulated and fixed every

word, every step, every movement, at a solemn presentation at court.

Marie Antoinette had had compassion on the timidity of the young creole, and to spare her the solemnity of a rigid presentation had twice received at a private audience the young Viscountess de Beauharnais, and had then received also her homage.*

The youthful, charming appearance of Josephine, her peculiar and at the same time ingenuous and graceful attitude, had not been without impression on the queen; and with the most sympathizing interest, she had heard of the sad disturbances which had clouded the matrimonial happiness of the young creole.

No longer, as before, had Marie Antoinette requested the Viscount de Beauharnais, the beautiful dancer of Versailles, to dance with her; and when Parliament had given its sentence, and openly and solemnly had proclaimed the innocency of Josephine, the accused wife, the queen also had loudly expressed her satisfaction at this judgment, and the Viscount de Beauharnais was no more invited to the court festivities.

About to enter into the house, the queen had recognized the young viscountess, and with a friendly movement of the head she beckoned her to approach, welcomed the marquis, whom her short-sightedness had not at once recognized, to her beloved Trianon, and she requested them both to visit her little kingdom as often as they would wish, and to examine every thing attentively.

In the goodness and generosity of her heart, the queen gladly desired to make amends to the young, timid woman, who, embarrassed and blushing, stood before her, for the sufferings she had endured, for the disgrace under which she had had to bow her head; she wanted to give the accused innocent one a reparation of honor such as Parliament and public sentiment had already done.

* Le Normand, "Histoire de l'Impératrice Josephine," vol. i., p. 97.



She was consequently all goodness, all condescension, all confidence; she spoke to Josephine, not as a queen to her favored subjects, but as a young woman to a young woman, as to her equal. With sympathetic friendliness she made inquiries concerning the welfare of the viscountess and her family; she invited her to come often to Trianon, and, with a flattering allusion to the vast knowledge of the viscountess in botany, she asked her if she was satisfied with the arrangements of garden and hot-houses.

Josephine, with the sensitiveness and fine tact natural to her, felt that the trivial flattery of a courtier would but be a wretched and inappropriate return for so much goodness and loving-kindness; she felt that frankness and truth were the thanks due to the queen's large-heartedness.

She therefore answered the queen's questions with impartial sincerity, and, encouraged by the kindness of the queen, she openly and clearly gave her opinion concerning the arrangement of the hot-houses, and drew the attention of the queen to some precious and choice plants which she had noticed in the hot-houses.

Marie Antoinette listened to her with lively interest, and at parting extended to her in a friendly manner her beautiful hand.

"Come soon again, viscountess," said she, with that beautiful smile which ever won her true hearts; "you are worthy to enjoy the beauty of my beloved Trianon, for you have eyes and sense for the beautiful. Examine everything closely, and when we see one another again, tell me what you have observed and what has pleased you. It will ever be a pleasure to see you." *

But Josephine was no more to see the beautiful queen,

* The very words of the queen.—See Le Normand, "Histoire," &c., vol. i., p. 135.

so worthy of compassion; and these kind words which Marie Antoinette had spoken to her were the last which Josephine was ever to hear from her lips.

A few days after this visit to Trianon, Josephine received from her parents in Martinique letters which had for their object to persuade her with the tenderness of love, with all the reasons of wisdom, to return to her home, to the house of her parents, to withdraw with bold resolution from all the inconveniences and humiliations of her precarious and dangerous situation, and, instead of living in humble solitude as a divorced, despised woman, sooner to come to Martinique, and there in her parents' home be again the beloved and welcomed daughter.

Josephine hesitated still. She could not come to the resolution of abandoning the hope of a reunion with Alexandre de Beauharnais; she dreamt yet of the happiness of seeing the beloved wanderer return to his wife, to his children.

But her aunt and her father-in-law knew better than she that there was no prospect of such an event; they knew that the viscount was still the impassioned lover of the beautiful Madame de Gisard; that she held him too tightly in her web to look for a possibility of his returning to his legitimate affection.

If any thing could rouse him from this love-spell, and bring him back to duty and reason, it would be that sudden, unexpected departure; it would be the conviction which would necessarily be impressed upon him, that Josephine desired to be forever separated from him; that she was conscious of being divorced from him forever, and that, in the pride of her insulted womanhood, she wished to withdraw herself and her daughter from his approaches, and from the scandal which his passion for Madame de Gisard was giving.

Such were the reasons with which her relatives, even the grandfather of her two children, sought to persuade her to



a voyage to Martinique—bitter though the anguish would be for them to be deprived of the presence of the gentle, lovely young woman, whose youthful freshness and grace had like sunshine cheered the lonely house in Fontainebleau; to see also part from them the little Hortense, whose joyous voice of childhood had now and then recalled the faithless son to the father's house, and which was still a bond which united Josephine with her husband and with his family.

Josephine had to give way before these arguments, however much her heart bled. She had long felt how much of impropriety and of danger there was in the situation of a young woman divorced from her husband, and how much more dignified and expedient it would be for her to return to her father's home and to the bosom of her family. She therefore took a decided resolution; she tore herself away from her relatives, from her beloved son, whom she could not take with her, for he belonged to the father. With a stream of painful tears she bade farewell to the love of youth, to the joys of youth, from which naught remained but the wounds of a despised heart, and the children who gazed at her with the beloved eyes of their father.

In the month of July of the year 1788, Josephine, with her little five-year-old daughter Hortense, left Fontainebleau, went to Havre, whence she embarked for Martinique.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### LIEUTENANT NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

WHILE the Viscountess Josephine de Beauharnais was, during long years of resignation, enduring all the anguish, humiliations, and agonies of an unhappy marriage, the first pain and sorrow had also clouded the days of the young