

led, in the minuet, the graceful "pas de châte," with the daughter of an emigrant marquis. The most fanatical men of the days of terror, now exalted into wealthy land-owners, led on in the gay waltz the daughters of their former landlords; and these women pressed the hand soiled with the blood of their relatives because now, as amends for their traffic in blood, they could offer future wealth and distinction.

It seemed that all Paris and all France had gone mad—that the whole nation was drunk with blood as with intoxicating wine, and wanted to stifle the voice of conscience in the horrible revelry of the saturnalia.

Josephine never took part in these public balls and festivities; never did the widow of General Beauharnais, one of the victims of the revolution, attend these *bals à la victime*, where man prided himself on his misfortune and gloried in his sorrows. The *Moniteur*—which then gave daily notices of the balls and amusements that were to take place in Paris, so as to let the world know how cheerful and happy every one felt there, and which made it its business to publish the names of the *ci-devants* and ex-nobles who had partaken in these festivities—never in its long and correct list mentions the name of the widow of General Beauharnais.

Josephine kept aloof from all these wild dissipations—these balls and banquets. She would neither dance, nor adorn herself in the memory of her husband; she would not take a part in the splendid festivities of a republic which had murdered him, and had pierced her loyal heart with the deepest wounds.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FIRST INTERVIEW.

IN the midst of these joys and amusements of the new-growing Paris, the storm of the thirteenth Vendémiaire launched forth its destructive thunderbolts, and another rent was made in the lofty structure of the republic. The royalists, who had cunningly frequented these *bals à la victime*, to weave intrigues and conspiracies, found their webs scattered, and the republic assumed a new form.

Napoleon with his sword had cut to pieces the webs and snares of the royalists as well as of the revolutionists, and France had to bow to the constitution. In the Tuileries now sat the Council of the Elders; in the *Salle du Manège* sat the Five Hundred; and in the palace of Luxemburg resided the five directors of the republic.

On the thirteenth Vendémiaire Paris had passed through a crisis of its revolutionary disease; and, to prevent its falling immediately into another, it permitted the newly-appointed commander-in-chief of the army of the interior of France, General Napoleon Bonaparte, to have every house strictly searched, and to confiscate all weapons found.

Even into the house of the Viscountess de Beauharnais, in the rue Chauteraine, came the soldiers of the republic to search for secreted weapons. They found there the sword of Alexandre de Beauharnais, which certainly Josephine had not hidden, for it was the chief ornament of her son's room. When Eugene, on the next Saturday, came to Paris from St. Germain, as he did every week, to pass the Sunday in his mother's house; to his great distress he saw vacant on the wall the place where the sword of his father had been hanging. With trembling voice and tears in her eyes his mother told him that General Bonaparte, the new com-

mander-in-chief, had ordered the sword to be carried away by his soldiers.

A cry of anger and of malediction was Eugene's answer; then with flaming eyes and cheeks burning with rage he rushed out, despite the supplications of his affrighted and anxious mother. Without pausing, without thinking—conscious only of this, that he must have again his father's sword, he rushed on. It was impossible, thought he, that the republic which had deprived his father of the honors due to him, his property, his money—that now, after his death, she should also take away his sword.

He must have this sword again! This was Eugene's firm determination, and this made him bold and resolute. He rushed into the palace where the general-in-chief, Bonaparte, resided, and with daring vehemence demanded an interview with the general; and, as the door-keeper hesitated, and even tried to push away the bold boy from the door of the drawing-room, Eugene turned about with so much energy, spoke, scolded, and raged so loudly and so freely, that the noise reached even the cabinet where General Bonaparte was. He opened the door, and in his short, imperious manner asked the cause of this uproar; and when the servant had told him, with a sign of the hand he beckoned the young man to come in.

Eugene de Beauharnais entered the drawing-room with a triumphant smile, and the eye of General Bonaparte was fixed with pleasure on the beautiful, intelligent countenance, on the tall, powerful figure of the fifteen-year-old boy. In that strange, soft accent which won hearts to Napoleon, he asked Eugene his business. The young man's cheeks became pallid, and with tremulous lips and angry looks, the vehement eloquence of youth and suffering, Eugene spoke of the loss he had sustained, and of the pain which had been added to it by despoiling him of the sword of his father, murdered by the republic.

At these last words of Eugene, Bonaparte's brow was overshadowed, and an appalling look met the face of the brave boy.

"You dare say that the republic has murdered your father?" asked he, in a loud, angry voice.

"I say it, and I say the truth!" exclaimed Eugene, who did not turn away his eyes from the flaming looks of the general. "Yes, the republic has murdered my father, for it has executed him as a criminal, as a traitor to his country, and he was innocent; he ever was a faithful servant of his country and of the republic."

"Who told you that it was so?" asked Bonaparte, abruptly.

"My heart and the republic itself tell me that my father was no traitor," exclaimed Eugene, warmly. "My mother loved him much, and she regrets him still. She would not do so had he been a traitor, and then the republic would not have done what it has done—it would not have returned to my mother the confiscated property of my father, but would, had he been considered guilty, have gladly kept it back."

The grave countenance of Bonaparte was overspread by a genial smile, and his eyes rested with the expression of innermost sympathy on the son of Josephine.

"You think, then, that the republic gladly keeps what it has?" asked he.

"I see that it gladly takes what belongs not to it," exclaimed Eugene, eagerly. "It has taken away my father's sword, which belonged to me, his son, and my mother has made me swear on that sword to hold my father's memory sacred, and to strive to be like him."

"Your mother is, it seems, a very virtuous old lady," said Bonaparte, in a friendly tone.

"My mother is a virtuous, young, and beautiful lady," said Eugene, sturdily; "and I am certain, general, that if

you knew her, you would not in your heart have caused her so much pain."

"She has, then, suffered much on account of this sword being taken away?" asked Bonaparte, interested.

"Yes, general, she has wept bitterly over this our loss, as I have. I cannot bear to see my mother weep; it breaks my heart. I therefore implore you to give me back my father's sword; and I swear to you that when I am a man, I will carry that sword only for the defence of my country, as my father had done."

General Bonaparte nodded kindly to the boy. "You are a brave defender of your cause," said he, "and I cannot refuse you—I must do as you wish."

He gave orders to an ordnance officer present in the room to bring General de Beauharnais's sword; and when the officer had gone to fetch it, Bonaparte, in a friendly and sympathizing manner, conversed with the boy. At last the ordnance officer returned, and handed the sword to the general.

With solemn gravity Bonaparte gave it to Eugene. "Take it, young man," said he, "but never forget that you have sworn to carry it only for the honor and defence of your country."

Eugene could not answer: tears started from his eyes, and with deep affection he pressed to his lips the recovered sword of his father.

This manifestation of true childish emotion moved Bonaparte to tender sympathy, and an expression of affectionate interest passed over his features as he offered his hand to Eugene.

"By Heaven, you are a good son," exclaimed he from his heart, "and you will be one day a good son to your country! Go, my boy, take to your mother your father's sword. Tell her that I salute her, though unknown to her—that I congratulate her in being the mother of so good and brave a son."

Such was the beginning of an acquaintance to which Josephine was indebted for an imperial crown, and, for what is still greater, an undying fame and an undying love.

Beaming with joy, Eugene returned to Josephine with his father's sword, and with all the glowing sentiments of thankfulness he related to her how kindly and obligingly General Bonaparte had received him, what friendly and affectionate words he had spoken to him, and how much forbearance and patience he had manifested to his impassioned request.

Josephine's maternal heart was sensitive and grateful for every expression of sympathy toward her son, and the goodness and forbearance of the general affected her the more; that she knew how bold and wild the boy, smarting under pain, must have been. She therefore hastened to perform a duty of politeness by calling the next day on General Bonaparte, to thank him for the kindness he had shown Eugene.

For the first time General Bonaparte stood in the presence of the woman who one day was to share his fame and greatness, and this first moment was decisive as to his and her future. Josephine's grace and elegance, her sweetness of disposition, her genial cheerfulness, the expression of lofty womanhood which permeated her whole being, and which protected her securely from any rough intrusion or familiarity; her fine, truly aristocratic bearing, which revealed at once a lady of the court and of the great world; her whole graceful and beautiful appearance captivated the heart of Napoleon at the first interview, and the very next day after receiving her short call he hastened to return it.

Josephine was not alone when General Bonaparte was announced; and when the servant named him she could not suppress an inward fear, without knowing why she was afraid. Her friends, who noticed her tremor and blush, laughed jestingly at the timidity which made her tremble

at the name of the conqueror of Paris, and this was, perhaps, the reason why Josephine received General Bonaparte with less complacency than she generally showed to her visitors.

Amid the general silence of all those present the young general (twenty-six years old) entered the drawing-room of the Viscountess de Beauharnais; and this silence, however flattering it might be to his pride, caused him a slight embarrassment. He therefore approached the beautiful widow with a certain abrupt and perplexed manner, and spoke to her in that hasty, imperious tone which might become a general, but which did not seem appropriate in a lady's saloon. General Pichegru, who stood near Josephine, smiled, and even her amiable countenance was overspread with a slight expression of scorn, as she fixed her beautiful eyes on this pale, thin little man, whose long, smooth hair fell in tangled disorder on either side of his temples over his sallow, hollow cheeks; whose whole sickly and gloomy appearance bore so little resemblance to the majestic figure of the lion to which he had been so often compared after his success of the thirteenth Vendémiaire.

"I perceive, general," suddenly exclaimed Josephine, "that you are sorry it was your duty to fill Paris once more with blood and horror. You would undoubtedly have preferred not to be obliged to carry out the bloody orders of the affrighted Convention?"

Bonaparte shrugged his shoulders somewhat. "That is very possible," said he, perfectly quiet. "But what can you expect, madame? We military men are but the automatons which the government sets in motion according to its good pleasure; we know only how to obey; the sections, however, cannot but congratulate themselves that I have spared them so much. Nearly all my cannon were loaded only with powder. I wanted to give a little lesson to the Parisians. The whole affair was nothing but the impress of my seal

on France. Such skirmishes are only the vespers of my fame." *

Josephine felt irritated, excited by the coldness with which Napoleon spoke of the slaughter of that day; and her eyes, otherwise so full of gentleness, were now animated with flashes of anger.

"Oh," cried she, "if you must purchase fame at such a price, I would sooner you were one of the victims!"

Bonaparte looked at her with astonishment, but as he perceived her flushed cheeks and flashing eyes, the sight of her grace and beauty ravished him, and a soft, pleasant smile suddenly illumined his countenance. He answered her violent attack by a light pleasantry, and with gladsome unaffectedness he gave to the conversation another turn. The small, pale, gloomy general was at once changed into a young, impassioned, amiable *cavalier*, whose countenance grew beautiful under the sparkling intelligence which animated it, and whose enchanting eloquence made his conversation attractive and lively, carrying with it the conviction of a superior mind.

After the visitors who had met that morning in Josephine's drawing-room had departed the general still remained, notwithstanding the astonished and questioning looks of the viscountess, paying no attention to her remarks about the fine weather, or her intention to enjoy a promenade. With rapid steps, and hands folded behind his back, he paced a few times to and fro the room, then standing before Josephine he fixed on her face a searching look.

"Madame," said he, suddenly, with a kind of rough tone, "I have a proposition to make: give me your hand. Be my wife!"

Josephine looked at him, half-astonished, half-irritated. "Is it a joke you are indulging in?" said she.

* Napoleon's words.—See *Le Normand*, vol. i., p. 214.

"I speak in all earnestness," said Bonaparte, warmly. "Will you do me the honor of giving me your hand?"

The gravity with which Bonaparte spoke, the deep earnestness imprinted on his features, convinced Josephine that the general would not condescend to indulge in a joke of so unseemly a character, and a lovely blush overspread the face of the viscountess.

"Sir," said she, "who knows if I might not be inclined to accept your distinguished offer, if, unfortunately, fate stood not in the way of your wishes?"

"Fate?" asked Bonaparte, with animation.

"Yes, fate! my general," repeated Josephine, smiling. "But let us speak no more of this. It is enough that fate forbids me to be the wife of General Bonaparte. I can say no more, for you would laugh at me."

"But you would laugh at me if you could turn me away with so vague an answer," cried Bonaparte, with vivacity. "I pray you, explain the meaning of your words."

"Well, then, general, I cannot be your wife, for I am destined to be Queen of France—yes, perhaps more than queen!"

It was now Bonaparte's turn to appear astonished and irritated, and using her own words he said, shrugging his shoulders, "Madame, is it a joke you are indulging in?"

"I speak in all earnestness," said Josephine, shaking her head. "Listen, then: a negro-woman in Martinique foretold my fortune, and as her oracular words have thus far been all fulfilled, I must conclude that the rest of her prophecies concerning me will be realized."

"And what has she prophesied to you?" asked Bonaparte, eagerly.

"She has told me: 'You will one day be Queen of France! you will be still more than queen!'"

The general was silent. He had remained standing; but now slowly paced the room a few times, his hands folded

on his back and his head inclined on his breast. Then again he stood before the viscountess, and his eyes rested upon her with a wondrous bright and genial expression.

"I bid defiance to fate," said he, somewhat solemnly. "This prophecy does not frighten me away, and in defiance of your prophetic negro-woman, I, the republican general, address my prayer to the future Queen of France: be my wife!—give me your hand."

Josephine felt almost affrighted at this pertinacity of the general, and a sentiment of apprehension overcame her as she looked into the pale, decided countenance of this man, a stranger to her, and who claimed her for his wife.

"Oh, sir," exclaimed she, with some anguish, "you offer me your hand with as much carelessness as if the whole matter were merely for a contra-dance. But I can assure you that marriage is a very grave matter, which has no resemblance whatever to a gay dance. I know it is so. I have had my sad experience, and I cannot so easily decide upon marrying a second time."

"You refuse my hand, then?" said Bonaparte, with a threatening tone.

Josephine smiled. "On the contrary, general," said she, "give me your hand and accompany me to my carriage, which has been waiting for me this long time."

"That means you dismiss me! You close upon me the door of your drawing-room?" exclaimed Bonaparte, with warmth.

She shook her head, and, bowing before him with her own irresistible grace, she said in a friendly manner: "I am too good a patriot not to be proud of seeing the conqueror of Toulon in my drawing-room. To-morrow I have an evening reception, and I invite you to be present, general."

From this day Bonaparte visited Josephine daily; she was certain to meet him everywhere. At first she sought to avoid him, but he always knew with cunning foresight how

to baffle her efforts, and to overcome all difficulties which she threw in his way. Was she at her friend Therese's, she could safely reckon that General Bonaparte would soon make his appearance and come near her with eyes beaming with joy, and in his own energetic language speak to her of his love and hopes. Was she to be present at the receptions of the five monarchs of Paris, it was General Bonaparte who waited for her at the door of the hall to offer his arm, and lead her amid the respectful, retreating, and gently applauding crowd to her seat, where he stood by her, drawing upon her the attention of all. Did she take a drive, at the accustomed hour, in the Champs Elyseés, she was confident soon to see General Bonaparte on his gray horse gallop at her side, followed by his brilliant staff, himself the object of public admiration and universal respect; and finally, if she went to the theatre, General Bonaparte never failed to appear in her *loge*, to remain near her during the performance; and when she left, to offer his arm to accompany her to her carriage.

It could not fail that this persevering homage of the renowned and universally admired young general should make a deep and flattering impression on Josephine's heart, and fill her with pride and joy. But Josephine made resistance to this feeling; she endeavored to shield herself from it by maternal love.

She sent for her two children from their respective schools, and with her nearly grown-up son on one side and her daughter budding into maidenhood on the other, she thus presented herself to the general, and with an enchanting smile said: "See, general, how old I am, with a grown-up son and daughter who soon can make of me a grandmother."

But Bonaparte with heart-felt emotion reached his hand to Eugene and said, "A man who can call so worthy a youth as this his son, is to be envied."

A cunning, smiling expression of the eye revealed to Josephine that he had understood her war-stratagem—that neither the grown-up son nor the marriageable daughter could deter him from his object.

Josephine at last was won by so much love and tenderness, but she could not yet acknowledge that the wounds of her heart were closed; that once more she could trust in happiness, and devote her life to a new love, to a new future. She shrank timidly away from such a shaping of her destiny; and even the persuasions of her friends and relatives, even of the father of her deceased husband, could not bring her to a decision.

The state of her mind is depicted in a letter which Josephine wrote to her friend Madame de Chateau Renaud, and which describes in a great measure the strange uncertainty of her heart:

"You have seen General Bonaparte at my house! Well, then, he is the one who wishes to be the father of the orphans of Alexandre de Beauharnais and the husband of his widow. 'Do you love him?' you will ask. Well, no!—'Do you feel any repugnance toward him?' No, but I feel in a state of vacillation and doubt, a state very disagreeable to me, and which the devout in religious matters consider to be the most scandalizing. As love is a kind of worship, one ought in its presence to feel animated by other feelings than those I now experience, and therefore I long for your advice, which might bring the constant indecision of my mind to a fixed conclusion. To adopt a firm course has always appeared to my creole *nonchalance* something beyond reach, and I find it infinitely more convenient to be led by the will of another.

"I admire the courage of the general; I am surprised at his ample knowledge, which enables him to speak fluently on every subject; at the vivacity of his genius, which enables him to guess at the thoughts of others before they are

expressed; but I avow, I am frightened at the power he seems to exercise over every one who comes near him. His searching look has something strange, which I cannot explain, but which has a controlling influence even upon our directors; judge, therefore, of his influence over a woman. Finally, the very thing which might please—the violence of his passion—of which he speaks with so much energy, and which admits of no doubt, that passion is exactly what creates in me the unwillingness I have so often been ready to express.

“The first bloom of youth lies behind me. Can I therefore hope that this passion, which in General Bonaparte resembles an attack of madness, will last long? If after our union he should cease to love me, would he not reproach me for what he had done? Would he not regret that he had not made another and more brilliant union? What could I then answer? What could I do? I could weep. ‘A splendid remedy!’ I hear you say. I know well that weeping is useless, but to weep has been the only resource which I could find when my poor heart, so easily wounded, has been hurt. Write to me a long letter, and do not fear to scold me if you think that I am wrong. You know well that every thing which comes from you is agreeable to me.”*

While Josephine was writing this letter to her friend, General Bonaparte received one which produced upon him the deepest impression, though it consisted only of a few words. But these words expressed the innermost thought of his soul, and revealed to him perhaps for the first time its secret wishes.

One evening as the general, returning home from a visit to the Viscountess Josephine, entered into his drawing-room, followed by some of his officers and adjutants, he ob-

* “Mémoires sur l’Impératrice Josephine,” par Madame Ducrest, p. 362.

served on a large timepiece, which stood on the mantel-piece, a letter, the deep-red paper and black seal of which attracted his attention.

“Whence this letter?” asked he, with animation, of the servant-man walking before him with a silver candlestick, as he pointed to the red envelope.

But the waiter declared that he had not seen the letter, and that he knew not where it came from.

“Ask the other servants, or the porter, who brought this red letter with the black seal,” ordered Bonaparte.

The servant hurried from the room, but soon returned, with the news that no one knew any thing about the letter; no one had seen it, no one knew who had placed it there.

“Well, then, let us see what it contains,” said Bonaparte, and he was going to break the seal, when Junot suddenly seized his hand and tore the letter away from him.

“Do not read it, general,” implored Junot; “I beseech you do not open this letter. Who knows if some of your enemies have not sent you a letter *à la* Catharine de Medicis? Who knows if it is not poisoned—that the mere touch of it may not produce death?”

Bonaparte smiled at this solicitude of his tender friend, yet he listened to his pressing alarms, and, instead of opening and reading the letter, he passed it to Junot.

“Read it yourself, if you have the courage to do so,” said he, familiarly shaking his head.

Junot rapidly broke the black seal and tore the red paper. Then, fixing his eyes on it, he threw it aside, and broke into loud, merry laughter.

“Well,” asked Bonaparte, “what does the letter contain?”

“A mystery, my general—nothing more than a mystery,” cried Junot, presenting the letter to Bonaparte.

The letter contained but these words:

"Macbeth, you will be king.

"THE RED MAN."

Junot laughed over this mysterious note, but Bonaparte shared not in his merriment. With compressed lips and frowning brow he looked at these strange, prophetic words, as if in their characters he wanted to discover the features of him who had dared to look into the most hidden recesses of his soul; then he threw the paper into the chimney-fire, and slowly and thoughtfully paced the room, while in a low voice he murmured, "Macbeth, you will be king."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARRIAGE.

AT last the conqueror of Toulon conquered also the heart of the young widow who had so anxiously struggled against him; at last Josephine overcame all her fears, all her terror, and, with joyous trust in the future, was betrothed to General Bonaparte. But even then, after having taken this decisive step, after love had cast away fear, even then she had not the courage to reveal to her children that she had contracted a new marriage-tie, that she was going to give to the orphans of the Viscount de Beauharnais a new father. Ashamed and timid as a young maid, she could not force herself into acknowledging to the children of her deceased husband that a new love had grown in her heart—that the mourning widow was to become again a happy woman.

Josephine, therefore, commissioned Madame de Campan to communicate this news to her Eugene and Hortense; to tell them that she desired not only to have a husband, but

also to give to her children a faithful, loving father, who had promised to their mother with sacred oaths to regard, love, and protect them as his own children.

The children of General Beauharnais received this news with tears in their eyes; they complained loudly and sorrowfully that their mother was giving up the name of their father and changing it for another; that the memory of their father would be forever lost in their mother's heart. But, through pure love for their mother, they soon dried up these tears; and when next day Josephine, accompanied by General Bonaparte, came to St. Germain, to visit Madame de Campan's institution, she met there her daughter and son, who both embraced her with the most tender affection, and, smiling under their tears, offered their hands to General Bonaparte, who, with all the sincerity and honesty of a deep, heart-felt emotion, embraced them in his arms, and solemnly promised to treat them as a father and a friend.

All Josephine's friends did not gladly give their approbation to her marriage with this small, insignificant general, as yet so little known, whose success before Toulon was already forgotten, and whose victory of the thirteenth Vendémiaire had brought him but little fame and made him many enemies.

Among the friends who in this union with Bonaparte saw very little happiness for Josephine was her lawyer, the advocate Ragideau, who for many years had been her family's agent, whose distinguished talent for pleading and whose small figure had made him known through all Paris, and of whom it was said that as a man he was but a dwarf; but as a lawyer, he was a giant.

One day, in virtue of an invitation from the Viscountess de Beauharnais, Ragideau came to the small hotel of the rue Chautereine, and sent his name to the viscountess. She received his visit, and at his entrance into her cabinet all those present retreated into the drawing-room contiguous