

"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

thereto, as they well knew that Josephine had some business transactions with her lawyer.

Only one small, pale man, in modest gray clothing, whom Ragideau did not condescend to notice, remained in the cabinet, who retired quietly within the recess of a window.

Josephine received her business agent with a friendly smile, and spoke long and in detail with him concerning a few important transactions which had reference to her approaching marriage. Then suddenly passing from the coldness of a business conversation to the tone of a friendly one, she asked M. Ragideau what the world said of her second marriage.

Ragideau shrugged his shoulders and assumed a thoughtful attitude. "Your friends, madame," said he, "see with sorrow that you are going to marry a soldier, who is younger than yourself, who possesses nothing but his salary, and therefore cannot leave the service; or, if he is killed in battle, leaves you perhaps with children, and without an inheritance."

"Do you share the opinion of my friends, my dear M. Ragideau?" asked Josephine, smiling.

"Yes," said the lawyer, earnestly, "yes, I share them—yes. I am not satisfied that you should contract such a marriage. You are rich, madame; you possess a capital which secures you a yearly income of twenty-five thousand francs; with such an income you had claims to a brilliant marriage; and I feel conscientiously obliged, as your friend and business agent, in whom you have trusted, and who has for you the deepest interest, to earnestly remonstrate with you while there is yet time. Consider it well, viscountess; it is a reckless step you are taking, and I entreat you not to do it. I speak to your own advantage. General Bonaparte may be a very good man, possibly quite a distinguished soldier, but certain it is he has only his hat and his sword to offer you."

Josephine now broke into a joyous laugh, and her beaming eyes turned to the young man there who, with his back turned to the party, stood at the window beating the panes with his fingers, apparently heedless of their conversation.

"General," cried out Josephine, cheerfully, "have you heard what M. Ragideau says?"

Bonaparte turned slowly round, and his large eyes fell with a flaming look upon the little advocate.

"Yes," said he, gravely, "I have heard all. M. Ragideau has spoken as an honest man, and every thing he has said fills me with esteem for him. I trust he will continue to be our agent, for I feel inclined to give him full confidence."

He bowed kindly to the little lawyer, who stood there bewildered and ashamed, and, offering his arm to Josephine, Bonaparte led her into the drawing-room.\*

The decisive word had been spoken: Josephine de Beauharnais was now the bride of General Bonaparte. His hitherto pale, gloomy countenance was all radiant with the bright light of love and happiness. The days of solitude and privations were forgotten; the young, beautiful Désirée Clary, whom Bonaparte so much loved a few months ago, and the amiable Madame Permont, were also forgotten (and yet to the latter, in her *loge* at the theatre, as a farce between acts, he had offered his hand); all the little love-intrigues of former days were forgotten; to Josephine alone belonged his heart, her alone he loved with all the impassioned glow and depth of a first exclusive love.

But yet, now and then, clouds darkened his large pensive brow; even her smile could not always illumine the gloomy

\* The little advocate Ragideau remained after this Josephine's agent. When Bonaparte had become emperor, he appointed Ragideau notary of the civil list, and always manifested the greatest interest in his behalf, and never by a word or a look did he remind him of the strange circumstance which brought about their acquaintance.—See Meneval, "Napoléon et Marie Louise," vol. i., p. 202.

expression on his features; it would happen that, plunged in deep, sad cogitations, he heard not the question which she addressed him in her remarkably soft and clear voice which Bonaparte so much loved.

His lofty pride felt humiliated and disgraced by the part he was now performing.

He was the general of the army of the interior, but beyond the frontiers of France there stood another French army, whose soldiers had not the sad mission to maintain peace and quietness at home, to fight against brothers; but an army seeking for the foe, whose blood and victories were to secure them laurels.

General Bonaparte longed to be with this army, and to obliterate the remembrance of the 13th Vendémiaire and its sad victory by brilliant exploits beyond the Alps. It was also to him a humiliating and depressing feeling to become the husband of a wealthy woman, and not bring her as a glorious gift or a wedding-present the fame and laurels of a husband.

It has often been said that Josephine obtained for her husband, as a wedding-gift, his appointment of commanding general of the army in Italy; that she procured this appointment from Barras, with whom, before her acquaintance with Bonaparte, she had been in closer relationship than that of mere friendship. Even such historians as Schlosser have accepted this calumny as truth, without taking pains to investigate whether the facts justified this supposition. In the great historical events which have shaken nations, it is really of little importance if, under the light which illumines and brings out such events, a shadow should fall and darken an individual. Even the hatred and scorn with which a nation, trodden down in the dust, curses a tyrant, and endeavors to take vengeance on his fame, ask not if the stone flung at the hated one falls upon other heads than the one aimed at.

Not Josephine, but Bonaparte, did they wish to injure when stating she had been the beloved of Barras. It was Bonaparte whom they wished to humble and mortify, when historians published that, not to his merits, but to the petitions of his wife, he was indebted for his commission as general of the army in Italy.

But truth justifies not this calumny; and when with the light of truth the path of the widow of General Beauharnais is lighted, it will be found that this path led to solitude and quietness; that at none of the great and brilliant banquets which Barras then gave, and which in the *Moniteur* are described with so much pomp, not once is the name of Viscountess de Beauharnais mentioned; that in the numerous pasquinades and lampoons which then appeared in Paris and in all France, and in which all private life was fathomed, not once is the name of Josephine brought out, neither is there any indirect allusion to her.

Calumny has placed this stain on Josephine's brow, but truth takes it away. And that truth is, that not Josephine, but Bonaparte, was the friend of Barras; that it was not Barras, but Carnot, who promoted Bonaparte to the rank of commanding general of the army in Italy.

Carnot, the minister of war of the republic, the noble, incorruptible republican, whose character, pure, bright, and true as steel, turned aside all the darts of wickedness and calumny, which could not inflict even a wound, or leave a stain on the brilliancy of his spotless character, has given upon this point his testimony in a refutation. At a later period, when the hatred of parties, and the events of the 18th Fructidor, had forced him to flee from France, he defended himself against the accusation launched at him in the Council of the Five Hundred, which pointed him out as a traitor to the republic; and this defence gave a detailed account of the whole time of his administration, and especially what he achieved for the republic,

claiming as one of his services the appointment of Bonaparte.

"It is not true," says he, "that Barras proposed Bonaparte for the chief command of the army in Italy. I myself did it. But time was allowed to intervene, so as to ascertain whether Bonaparte would succeed before Barras congratulated himself, and then only to his confidants, that it was he who had made this proposition to the Directory. Had Bonaparte not answered the expectations, then I should have been the one to blame: then it would have been I who had chosen a young, inexperienced, intriguing man; and I who had betrayed the nation, for the other members did not interfere in war-matters; upon me all responsibility would have fallen. But as Bonaparte is victorious, then it must be Barras who appointed him! To Barras alone are the people indebted for this nomination! He is Bonaparte's protector, his defender against my attacks! I am jealous of Bonaparte; I cross him in all his plans; I lower his character; I persecute him; I refuse him all assistance; I, in all probability, am to plunge him into ruin!"—such were the calumnies which at that time filled the journals bribed by Barras.\*

To Carnot, the secretary of war of the republic, did Bonaparte go, to ask of him the command of the army in Italy. But Carnot answered him, as he had already before Aubry, the minister of war, "You are too young."

"Let us put appearances and age aside," said Bonaparte, impatiently. "Alexander, Scipio, Condé, and many others, though still younger than I, marched armies to brilliant conquests, and decided the fate of whole kingdoms. I believe I have given a few proofs of what I can achieve, if

\* "Response de L. N. M. Carnot, citoyen français, l'un des fondateurs de la république, et membre constitutionnel du Directoire exécutif au rapport fait sur la conjuration du 18 Fructidor au conseil des Cinq Cents."

I am set at the right place; and I burn with great longing to serve my country, to obtain victories over despots who hate France because they fear, calumniate, and envy her!"

"I know you are a good patriot," said Carnot, slowly turning his head; "I know and appreciate your services, and you may rest assured that the obstacles which I place in your path are not directed against you personally. But do you know the situation of our army? It is devoured by the quartermaster; betrayed and sold, I fear, by its general, and demoralized, notwithstanding its successes! That army needs every thing, even discipline, whilst the enemy's army has all that we need. We want nearly a miracle to be victorious. Whoever is to lead to success our disordered, famished, disorganized army must, above all things, possess its full confidence. Besides which, without further events, I cannot dismiss the commanding general, Scherer, but I must wait until some new disgrace furnishes me the right to do so. You know all. Judge for yourself."

"I have already made all these objections within my own mind," replied Bonaparte, quietly; "yet I do not despair that if you will give me your advice and assistance, I will overcome all these difficulties. Listen to me, and I will let you know my plan for the arrangement of the war, and I am convinced you will give it your sanction."

With glowing eloquence, complete clearness and assurance, and the convincing quietude of a persuaded, all-embracing, all-weighting mind, Bonaparte unfolded the daring and astounding plan of his campaign. As he spoke, his face brightened more and more, his eyes glowed with the fire of inspiration, his countenance beamed with that exalted, wondrous beauty which is granted to genius alone in the highest moments of its ecstasy; the small, insignificant, pale young man became the bold, daring hero, who was fully prepared gladly to tread a world under his feet.

Carnot, who had looked on in astonishment, was finally carried away, inspired by the persuasive eloquence of the young general, who in a few words understood how to map out battle-fields, to measure whole engagements, and to give to every one the needful and appropriate place.

"You are right," cried Carnot, delighted, and offering his hand to Bonaparte. "This plan must be carried out, and then we shall conquer our enemies. I no longer doubt of the result, and from this moment you can rely upon me. You shall be commander-in-chief of the army in Italy. I will myself propose you to the Directory, and I will so warmly speak in your favor, that my request will be granted."\*

On this day the face of General Bonaparte was irradiated with a still deeper lustre than when Josephine avowed that his love was returned, and when she consented to be his.

Josephine's affianced, in the depths of his heart, retained a deep, unfulfilled desire, an unreachd aim of his existence. The commanding general of the army in Italy had nothing more to wish, or to long for; he now stood at hope's summit, and saw before him the brilliant, glorious goal of ambition toward which the path lay open before him.

Love alone could not satisfy the heart of Napoleon; the larger portion of it belonged to ambition—to the lust for a warrior's fame.

"I am going to live only for the future," said Bonaparte, that day, to Junot, as he related to him the successful result of his interview with Carnot. "None of you know me yet, but you will soon. You will see what I can do: I feel within me something which urges me onward. Too long has the war been limited to a single district; I will take it into the heart of the continent, I will bring it on fresh soil,

\* "Mémoires historiques et militaires, sur Carnot," vol. ii.

and so carry it out that the men of habit will lose their footing, and the old officers their heads, so that they will no more know where they are. The soldiers will see what one man, with a will of iron, can accomplish. All this I will do—and from this day I strike out from the dictionary the word 'impossible!'"

Carnot was true to his word. On the 23d day of February, 1796, Bonaparte was appointed by the Directory commander-in-chief of the army of Italy.

From the face of the young general beamed forth the smile of victory; he was now certain of the future! He now knew that to his Josephine he could offer more than a hat and a sword, that he would bring her undying fame and victory's brilliant crown. This was to be the dowry before which the twenty-five thousand francs' yearly income, which the little giant Ragideau had so highly prized, would fall into the background.

On the 9th of March the marriage between General Bonaparte and the widow Viscountess Josephine de Beauharnais took place. Barras, as member of the government, was Bonaparte's first witness; his second was Captain Lemarrois, his adjutant; and the choice of this witness was a delicate homage which Napoleon paid to his dear Josephine: for Lemarrois was the one who had first led the boy Eugene to Bonaparte, and had thus been the means of his acquaintance with Josephine.

The two witnesses of Josephine were Tallien, who had delivered her from prison, and to whom she owed the restoration of her property, and a M. Calmelet, an old friend and counsellor of the Beauharnais family.\*

In the pure modesty of her heart, Josephine had not desired that the two children of her deceased husband should be the witnesses of her second marriage, and Bonaparte was

\* "Souvenirs historiques du Baron de Meneval," vol. i., p. 340.

glad that Josephine's bridal wreath would not be bedewed with the tears of memory.

On this happy day of Bonaparte's marriage, so much of the past was set aside, that the certificate of baptism of the betrothed was forgotten, and the number of years which made Josephine older than Bonaparte was struck out.

The civil record, which M. Leclerc received of the marriage of Bonaparte and Josephine, describes them as being nearly of the same age, for it ran thus: "Napoleon Bonaparte, born in Ajaccio, on the 5th of February, 1768; and Marie Josephe Rosa Tascher de la Pagerie, born in Martinique, the 23d of June, 1767."

Bonaparte's glowing and impassioned love led him—in order to spare his Josephine the smallest degree of humiliation—to alter and destroy the dates of the certificate of their baptism; for Bonaparte was born on the 15th of August, 1769, and Josephine on the 23d of June, 1763. She was consequently six years older than he; but she knew not that these six years would, one day, be the abyss which was to swallow her happiness, her love, her grandeur.

Two days after his marriage with Josephine, Bonaparte left Paris for the army, to travel in haste, an uninterrupted journey toward Italy.

"I must hasten to my post," said he smiling to Josephine, "for an army without a chief is like a widow who can commit foolish deeds and endanger her reputation. I am responsible for the army's conduct from the moment of my appointment."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## BONAPARTE'S LOVE-LETTERS.

CARNOT had told Bonaparte the truth concerning the state of the army in Italy. His statements were sustained by the proclamation which the new commander-in-chief of the army in Italy addressed to his soldiers, as for the first time he welcomed them at Nice.

"Soldiers," said he, "you are naked and badly fed; the government owes you much, and can give you nothing. Your patience and the courage you have exhibited amid these rocks are worthy of admiration; but you gain no fame: no glory falls upon you here. I will lead you into the fertile plains of the world; rich provinces and large cities will fall into your power; there you will find honor, fame, and abundance. Soldiers of Italy, would you fail in courage and perseverance?" \*

The mangled, ragged, half-starved soldiers answered with loud enthusiastic shouts. When the *vivats* had died away, an old veteran came out of the ranks, and with countenance half-defiant, half-smiling, looking at the little general, he asked: "General, what must we do that the roasted partridges, which are promised to us, may fly into our mouths?"

"Conquer," cried Bonaparte, with a loud resounding voice—"conquer! To the brave, glory and good repasts! To the coward, disgrace! To the faint-hearted, misery! I will lead you into the path of victory. Will you follow?"

"We will, we will!" shouted the soldiers. "Long live the little general who is to deliver us from our wretchedness, who is to lead us into victory's path!"

\* Norvins, "Histoire de Napoléon," vol. i., p. 89.