

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.

Bonaparte kept his word. He led them to Voltri, to the bridge of Arcola, to Lodi.

But amid his wild career of fights, hardships, vigils, studies, and perils, the thought of Josephine was the guiding star of his heart. His mind was with her amid the battle's storm; he thought of her in the camp, on the march, in the greatest conflict, and after the most brilliant victories. This was shown in the letters he wrote every day to Josephine; and in the brilliant hymns which the warrior, amid the carnage of war, sung with the enthusiastic fervor of a poet to his love and to his happiness.

It is the mission of eminent historians, when describing his victorious campaign of Italy, to narrate his conquests; our mission is simply to observe him in his conduct toward Josephine, and to show how under the uniform of the warrior beat the heart of the lover.

The letters which Bonaparte then wrote to Josephine are consequently what concerns us most, and from which we will select a few as a proof of the impassioned love which Napoleon felt for his young wife.

LETTERS OF GENERAL BONAPARTE TO JOSEPHINE.

I.

“PORT MAURICE, *the 14th Germinal (April 3), 1796.*

“I have received all your letters, but none has made so much impression on me as the last one. How can you, my adored friend, speak to me in that way? Do you not believe that my situation here is already horrible enough, without your exciting my longings, and still more setting my soul in rebellion? What a style! what emotions you describe! They glow like fire, they burn my poor heart! My own Josephine, away from you, there is no joy; away from you, the world is a wilderness in which I feel alone, and have no one in whom I can confide. You have taken

from me more than my soul; you are the only thought of my life. When I feel weary with the burden of affairs, when I dread some inauspicious result, when men oppose me, when I am ready to curse life itself, I place my hand upon my heart, your image beats there; I gaze on it, and love is for me absolute bliss, and everything smiles except when I am away from my beloved.

“By what art have you been able to enchain all my powers, and to concentrate in yourself all my mental existence? It is an enchantment, my dear friend, which is to end only with my life. To live for Josephine, such is the history of my life! I am working to return to you, I am dying to approach you! Fool that I am, I see not that I am more and more drifting away from you! How much space, how many mountains separate us! how long before you can read these words, the feeble expression of a throbbing soul in which you rule! Ah, my adored wife, I know not what future awaits me, but if it keeps me much longer away from you, it will be intolerable; my courage reaches not that far. There was a time when I was proud of my reputation; and sometimes when I cast my eyes on the wrong which men could have done me, on the fate which Providence might have in reserve for me, I prepared myself for the most unheard-of adversities without wrinkling the brow or suffering fear; but now the thought that my Josephine should be uncomfortable, or sick, or, above all, the cruel, horrible thought that she might love me less, makes my soul tremble, and my blood to remain still, bringing on sadness, despondency, and taking away even the courage of anger and despair. In times past I used to say, ‘Men have no power over him who dies without regret.’ But now to die without being loved by you, to die without the certainty of being loved, is for me the pains of hell, the living, fearful feeling of complete annihilation. It is as if I were going to suffocate! My own companion, you whom fate has given

me, to make life's painful journey, the day when no more I can call your heart mine, when nature will be for me without warmth, without vitality. . . . I will give way, my sweet friend (*ma douce amie*); my soul is sorrowful, my body languishes; men weary me. I have a good right to detest them, for they keep me away from my heart.

"I am now in Port Maurice, near to Oneglia; to-morrow I go to Albenga. Both armies are moving forward; we are endeavoring to deceive each other. Victory belongs to the swiftest. I am well satisfied with General Beaulieu, he manoeuvres well; he is a stronger man than his predecessor. I trust to beat him soundly. Be without care; love me as your eyes; but no, that is not enough, as yourself, more than yourself, as your thoughts, as your spirit, your life, your all! Sweet friend, pardon me; I am beyond myself; nature is too weak for him who feels with passion, for him whom you love.

"To Barras, Sucey, Madame Tallien, my heart-felt friendship; to Madame Chateau Renaud, kindest regards; for Eugene and Hortense, my true love. N. B."

II.

"ALBENGA, the 18th Germinal (April 7), 1796.*

"I have just now received your letter, which you break off, as you say, to go to the country; and then, you assume a tone as if you were envious of me, who am here nearly

* The three following letters have never been published until recently, and are not to be found in any collection of letters from Napoleon and Josephine, not even among those published by Queen Hortense: "Lettres de Napoléon à Josephine, et de Josephine à Napoléon." They are published for the first time in the "Histoire de l'Impératrice Josephine," by Aubenas, and were communicated to this author in Napoleon's manuscript by the well-known and famous gatherer of autographs, Feuillet de Couches.

overwhelmed by affairs and by exertion! Ah, my dear friend, . . . it is true, I am wrong. In the spring it is so pleasant in the country; and then the beloved one of eighteen years will be so happy there; how would it be possible to lose one moment for the sake of writing to him who is three hundred miles away from you, who lives, breathes, exists only in remembering you, who reads your letters as a man, after hunting for six hours, devours a meal he is fond of.

"I am satisfied. Your last letter is cold, like friendship. I have not found in it the fire which glows in your eyes, the fire which I have at least imagined to be there. So far runs my fancy. I found that your first letters oppressed my soul too much; the revolution which they created in me disturbed my peace and bewildered my senses. I wanted letters more cold, and now they bring on me the chill of death. The fear of being no more loved by Josephine—the thought of having her inconstant—of seeing her . . . But I martyrize myself with anguish! There is enough in the reality, without imagining any more! You cannot have inspired me with this immeasurable love without sharing it; and with such a soul, such thoughts, such an understanding as you possess, it is impossible that, as a reward for the most glowing attachment and devotion, you should return a mortal blow. . . .

"You say nothing of your bodily sufferings; they have my regret. Farewell till to-morrow, *mio dolce amor*. From my own wife a thought—and from fate a victory; these are all my wishes: one sole, undivided thought from you, worthy of him who every moment thinks of you.

"My brother is here. He has heard of my marriage with pleasure. He longs to become acquainted with you. I am endeavoring to persuade him to go to Paris. His wife has recently given birth to a daughter. They send you a box of *bonbons* from Genoa as a present. You will receive

oranges, perfumes, and water of orange-flowers, which I send you. Junot and Murat send their best wishes.

“N. B.”

The victory which Bonaparte implored from his destiny was soon to take place; and the battle of Mondovi, which followed the capitulation of Cherasco, made Bonaparte master of Piedmont and of the passes of the Alps. He sent his brother Joseph to Paris, to lay before the Directory pressing considerations concerning the necessity and importance of concluding a permanent peace with the King of Sardinia, so as to isolate Austria entirely in Italy. At the same time Junot was to take to the Directory the conquered standards. Joseph and Junot travelled together from Nice by means of post-horses, and they made so rapid a journey that in one hundred and twenty hours they reached Paris.

The victor's messengers and the conquered flags were received in Paris with shouts of rapture, and with a glowing enthusiasm for General Bonaparte. His name was on every tongue. In the streets and on the squares crowds gathered together to talk of the glorious news, and to shout their acclamations to the brave army and its general. Even the Directory, the five monarchs of France, shared the universal joy and enthusiasm. They received Joseph and Junot with affable complacency, and communicated to the army and to its general public eulogies. In honor of the messengers who had brought the standards and the propositions of peace, they gave a brilliant banquet; and Carnot, proud of having been the one who had brought about Bonaparte's appointment, went so far in his enthusiasm as at the close of the banquet to tear his garments open and exhibit to the assembled guests Napoleon's portrait which he carried on his breast.

“Tell your brother,” cried he to Joseph, “that I carry him here on my heart, for I foresee he will be the deliverer

of France, and therefore he must know that in the Directory he has only admirers and friends.”*

But something else, more glorious than these salutations of love from France and from the Directory, was to be brought back by his messengers to the victorious commander—his wife, his Josephine; he claimed her as the reward of battles won. Joseph was not only the messenger of the general, he was also the messenger of the lover; and before delivering his papers to the Directory, he had first, as Bonaparte had ordered him, to deliver to Josephine his letter which called her to Milan. Napoleon had thus written to her:

III.

“TO MY SWEET FRIEND!

“CARN, the 3rd Floreal (May 24), 1796.

“My brother will hand you this letter. I cherish for him the most intimate friendship. I trust he will also gain your affection. He deserves it. Nature has gifted him with a tender and inexhaustibly good character; he is full of rare qualities. I write to Barras to have him appointed consul to some Italian port. He desires to live with his little wife away from the world's great stream of events. I recommend him to you.

“I have received your letters of the 16th and of the 21st. You have indeed for many days forgotten to write. What, then, are you doing? Yes, my dear friend, I am not exactly jealous, but I am sometimes uneasy. Hasten, then, for I tell you beforehand that if you delay I shall be sick. So great exertion, combined with your absence, is too much.

“Your letters are the joys of my days, and my happy days are not too many. Junot takes to Paris twenty-two standards. You will come back with him, will you not?

* “Mémoires du Roi Joseph,” vol. i., p. 62.

. . . . Misery without remedy, sorrow without comfort, unmitigated anguish, will be my portion if it is my misfortune to see him come back alone, my own adored wife! He will see you, he will breathe at your shrine, and perhaps you will even grant him the special and unsurpassed privilege of kissing your cheeks, and I, I will be far, far away! You will come here, at my side, to my heart, in my arms! Take wings, come, come! Yet, journey slowly; the road is long, bad, fatiguing! If your carriage were to upset, if some calamity were to happen, if the exertion Set out at once, my beloved one, but travel slowly!

"I have received a letter from Hortense, a very acceptable one indeed. I am going to answer it. I love her much, and will soon send her the perfumes she desires. N. B."

But Josephine could not meet at once the ardent wishes of her husband. She had, on the receipt of his letter, made with Joseph all the necessary preparations for the journey; but the ailment which had so long troubled her, broke out, and a violent illness prostrated her.

Bonaparte's suffering and anger at this news were unbounded; a terrible restlessness and anxiety took possession of him, and, to obtain speedy and reliable news from Josephine, he sent from Milan to Paris a special courier, whose only business it was to carry a letter to Josephine.

The general had nothing to communicate to the Directory; it was only the lover writing to his beloved! What fire, what energy of passion, penetrated him, is evident from the following letter:

IV.

"TORTONA, at noon, the 27th Prairial,
"In the Year IV. of the Republic (15th June, 1796).

"TO JOSEPHINE: My life is a ceaseless Alpine burden. An oppressive foreboding prevents me from breathing. I

live no more, I have lost more than life, more than happiness, more than rest! I am without hope. I send you a courier. He will remain only four hours in Paris, and return with your answer. Write me only ten lines; they will be some comfort to me. . . . You are sick, you love me, I have troubled you; you are pregnant, and I cannot see you. This thought bewilders me. I have done you so much wrong, that I know not how to make amends for it. I found fault because you remained in Paris, and you were sick! Forgive me, my beloved. The passion you have inspired in me has taken my reason away; I cannot find it again. One is never cured of this evil. My contemplations are so horrible, that it would be a satisfaction to see you; to press you for two hours to my heart, and then, to die together! Who takes care of you? I imagine that you have sent for Hortense. I love this child a thousand times more, when I think she can comfort you somewhat. As regards myself, there will be no solace, no rest, no hope, before the courier whom I have sent to you has returned, and you have told me in a long letter the cause of your illness, and how serious it is. I tell you beforehand that if it is dangerous I will at once go to Paris. My presence would be called for by your sickness. I have always been fortunate. Never has Fate stood against my wishes, and to-day it strikes me where only wounds are possible. Josephine, how can you delay so long in writing to me? Your last laconic note is dated the 3d of this month, and this adds to my sorrow. Yet I have it always in my pocket. Your portrait and your letters are always under my eyes.

"I am nothing without you. I can scarcely understand how I have lived without knowing you. Ah, Josephine, if you know my heart, could you remain without writing from the 29th of May to the 16th of June, and not travel hither? Have you lent an ear to faithless friends, who wish to keep you away from me? I am angry with the whole world; I

accuse every one round about you. I had calculated that you would leave on the 5th, and be at Milan on the 15th.

"Josephine, if you love me, if you believe that all depends on the recovery of your health, take good care of yourself. I dare not tell you not to undertake so long a journey—not to travel in the heat, if you possibly can move. Make small journeys; write to me at every stopping-place, and send me each time your letters by a courier. . . . Your sickness troubles me by night and by day. Without appetite or sleep, without regard for friendship, reputation, or country!—you and you alone! The rest of the world exists no more for me than if it were sunk into oblivion. I still cling to honor, for you hold to it; to fame, for it is a joy to you; if it were not for this, I would have abandoned every thing to hasten to your feet.

"Sometimes, I say to myself: 'I trouble myself without cause, she is already well, she has left Paris and is on the way, she is perhaps in Lyons.' . . . Fruitless deception! You are in your bed, suffering—more interesting—more worthy of adoration; you are pale, and your eyes are more languishing than ever! when you are well again, if one of us is to be sick, cannot I be the one? for I am stronger, I have more vital power, and would therefore sooner conquer sickness. Fate is cruel, it strikes me through you.

"What sometimes comforts me is to know that on fate depends your sickness, but that it depends on no one to oblige me to outlive you.

"Be careful, my dearly-beloved one, to tell me in your letter that you are convinced that I love you above all that can be conceived; that never has it come to me to think of other women; that they are all in my eyes without grace, beauty, or wit; that you, you entirely, you as I see you, as you are, can please me and fetter all the powers of my soul; that you have grasped it in all its immeasurableness; that my heart has no folds closed from your eyes, no thoughts

which belong not to you; that my energies, arms, mind, every thing in me, is subject to you; that my spirit lives in your body; that the day when you will be inconstant or when you will cease to live, will be the day of my death, and that nature and earth are beautiful to my eyes only because you live in them. If you do not believe all this, if your soul is not convinced of it, penetrated with it, then I am deceived in you, then you love me no more. A magnetic fluid runs between persons who love one another. You know that I could never see, much less could I endure, a lover: to see him and to tear his heart would be one and the same thing; and then I might even lay hands on your sacred person . . . no, I would never dare do it, but I would fly from a world where those I deem the most virtuous have deceived me.

"But I am certain of your love, and proud of it. Accidents are probations which keep alive all the energies of our mutual affections. My adored one, you will give birth to a child resembling his mother; it will pass many years in your arms. Unfortunate that I am, I would be satisfied with one day! A thousand kisses on your eyes and lips! . . . adored wife, how mighty is your spell! I am ill on account of your illness. I have a burning fever. Retain the courier no longer than six hours; then let him return, that he may bring me a letter from my sovereign. N. B."

These were the first letters which Josephine received from her loving, tender husband. They are a splendid monument of affection with which love adorns the solitary grave of the departed empress; and surely in the dark hours of her life, the remembrance of these days of happiness, of these letters so full of passionate ardor, must have alleviated the bitterness of her grief and given her the consolation that at least she was once loved as perhaps no other woman on earth can boast! All these letters of Bonaparte,

during the days of his first prosperity, and of his earnest cravings, Josephine had carefully gathered; they were to be, amid the precious and costly treasures which the future was to lay at her feet, the most glorious and most prized, and which she preserved with sacred loyalty as long as she lived.

This is the reason that, out of all the letters which Bonaparte wrote to Josephine during long years, not one is lost; that there is no gap in the correspondence, and that we can with complete certainty, from week to week and year to year, follow the relations which existed between them, and that the thermometer can be placed on Bonaparte's heart to observe how by degrees the heat diminishes, the warmth of passion disappears into the cool temperature of a quiet friendship, and how it never sinks to cold indifference, even when Josephine had to yield to the young and proud daughter of Austria, and give up her place at the side of the emperor.

Of all the letters of Josephine to Bonaparte, which were now so glowing that they seemed to devour him with flames of fire and bewildered his senses, and then so cold and indifferent that they caused the chill of death to pass over his frame—of all these, not one has been preserved to posterity. Perhaps the Emperor Napoleon destroyed them; when in the Tuileries he received Josephine's successor, his second wife, and when he endeavored to destroy in his own proud heart the memory of the beautiful, happy past, he there destroyed those letters, that they might return to dust, even as his own love had returned.

CHAPTER XXV.

JOSEPHINE IN ITALY.

BONAPARTE'S letter, which the courier brought to Josephine, found her recovered, and ready to follow her husband's call, and go to Milan. But she was deprived of one precious and joyous hope: the child, which Bonaparte so much envied because it would pass many years in Josephine's arms, was never to be born.

In the last days of the month of June Josephine arrived in Milan. Her whole journey had been one uninterrupted triumph. In Turin, at the court of the King of Sardinia, she had received the homage of the people as if she were the wife of a mighty ruler; and wherever she went, she was received with honors and distinction. To Turin Bonaparte had sent before him one of his adjutants, General Marmont, afterward Duke de Ragusa, to convey to her his kindest regards and to accompany her with a military escort as far as Milan. In the palace de Serbelloni, his residence in Milan, adorned as for a feast, Bonaparte received her with a countenance radiant with joy and happy smiles such as seldom brightened his pale, gloomy features.

But Bonaparte had neither much time nor leisure to devote to his domestic happiness, to his long-expected reunion with Josephine. Only three days could the happy lover obtain from the restless commander; then he had to tear himself away from his sweet repose, to carry on further the deadly strife which he had begun in Italy against Austria—which had decided not to give away one foot of Lombardy without a struggle—and not to submit to the conqueror of Lodi. A new army was marched into Italy under the command of General Wurmser, the same against whom, three years before, on the shores of the Rhine, Alexandre de Beauharnais had fought in vain. At the head of sixty