

BOOK III.

THE EMPRESS AND THE DIVORCED.

CHAPTER XXX.

PLOMBIÈRES AND MALMAISON.

WHILE Bonaparte with the French fleet was sailing toward the East, there, in the wide valley of the Nile, to win a new fame, Josephine started for Plombières, where she had requested her daughter Hortense to meet her. The splendid scenery and pleasant quietude of Plombières offered at least some comfort and satisfaction to Josephine, whose heart was not yet healed from the anguish of separation. Her greatest consolation was the thought that in a few months she would go to her husband; that the *Pomona* would bear her to him who now possessed her whole soul, and surrounded her whole being with an enchantment which was to cease only with her life.

She counted the days, the weeks, which separated her from the wished-for journey; she waited with impatient longing for the news that the *Pomona*, which needed a few repairs, was ready and all prepared for the distant but welcome voyage.

Her sole recreation consisted in the company of, and in the cordial fellowship with Hortense, now grown up a young lady, and the companionship of a few intimate ladies who had followed her to Plombières. Surrounded by these, she either sat in her drawing-room, busy with some manual labor, or else, followed by a single servant, she and Hortense

made long walks in the wonderfully romantic vicinity of Plombières.

One morning she was in the drawing-room with her friends, working with the needle, conversing, and finding recreation in stepping through the wide-open folding-doors upon the balcony, from which a most enchanting view could be had of the lovely valley, and the mountains which stood round about it. While there, busily embroidering a rose, one of her friends, who had gone to the balcony, called her to come quickly to admire a remarkably small greyhound which was passing down the street. Josephine, whose love for dogs had made Napoleon pass many a restless hour, hastened to obey her friend's call, and went out upon the balcony, whither the rest of the ladies followed her, all curious to see the greyhound which had set Madame de Cambis into such an excitement. But the weight of these six ladies, gathered close together on the balcony, was too heavy for the plank and joist-work loosely put together. A fearful crash was heard; and as Hortense, who had remained in the drawing-room, busy with her painting, looked out, she saw neither the ladies nor the balcony. All had disappeared—nothing but a cloud of dust arose from the street, amidst a confusion of cries of distress, of shouts for help, and groans of pain.

The balcony, with the ladies, had been precipitated into the street, and all those who were on it were more or less severely injured. Josephine recognized it as a providential protection that she had not paid with broken limbs, like her friends, for the curiosity of seeing the beautiful little greyhound, but had only received violent contusions and sprained joints. For weeks she had to suffer from the consequences of this fall, and was confined to her bed, not being able to lift herself up, nor with her bruised, swollen hands to bring the food to her mouth during this time. Hortense had to wait upon her mother as she

had waited upon her when she was only a small, helpless child.

While Josephine was thus for these weeks suffering, the *Pomona*, fully equipped, was sent to sea, for she was intrusted with important instructions for the commanding general Bonaparte, and could not possibly be detained for Josephine's recovery. She received this news with bitter tears, and resolutely declared that no sooner should she be recovered than she would sail for Egypt in any kind of vessel; that she was firmly decided to follow her husband and share his dangers.

She had, however, twice received letters from Bonaparte. In the first of these he had, full of tender solicitude, entreated her not to undertake the fatiguing and dangerous voyage; in the second he had commanded her with all the earnestness of love to give up the enterprise, and requested as a proof of her affection and faithfulness, that she would listen to reason, remain in Paris, and watch over his interests, and be his guardian angel.

Josephine read this last letter with a sorrowful smile, and, as she handed it to her friend Madame de Chateau-Renaud, she said, sighing :

"The days of happiness are over. While in Italy, Bonaparte required that I should bid defiance to all dangers, so as to be at his side, for his letters then demanded my presence. Now he orders me to avoid dangers, and to remain quietly at home."

"But it is out of pure love he does this!" exclaimed her friend. "See how affectionate and how tender his letter is! Certainly no man can love his wife more warmly than Bonaparte loves you."

"Oh, yes," sighed Josephine, "he loves me yet, but I am no longer absolutely necessary—he can live without me; once love ruled over his reason, now his reason rules over his love. It will be as I fear: I shall day by day love him

more fondly and more passionately, for he is my last love, but he will every day love me less, for perhaps I am his first love, and his heart will be young long after he reads upon my face that I am six years older than he."

However, she conformed to the wishes of her husband; she was resigned, and gave up the thought of going to Egypt. At first she did it only with tears, but soon after there came news which made her accept her husband's wishes as the commands of Fate.

The *Pomona*, the vessel which had once brought her from Martinique to France, and on board of which she was to go to Egypt, had been captured by an English man-of-war, and all her passengers sent as prisoners to England.

The fall from the balcony had therefore saved Josephine from being carried into captivity to England. To this fall she owed her liberty! With all the levity and superstition of a creole, Josephine looked upon this fortunate mishap as a warning from Fate, and it seemed to her as if this had taken place to hinder her journey to Egypt. She therefore dried her tears and submitted to the orders alike of Fate and of her husband.

She remained in France, and accepted her mission to watch, as a true friend and beloved one, over the interests of her husband, to observe his friends and foes, and to send him news of every thing which it was important for him to know.

Once her fate decided, and she resolved to remain in France, she determined to make her life comfortable and pleasant; she wished to prepare for herself and her children a joyous existence, and procure also for her returning husband a gift which she knew would meet a long-cherished wish of his.

She bought a residence, situated not far from Paris, the Castle Malmaison, if the name of castle can be properly given to a pretty, tastefully-built country residence, tolerably large and plain, but surrounded by a beautiful park.

Their wishes and wants were yet simple, and the country residence, Malmaison, was amply sufficient to receive the family and the friends of General Bonaparte and his wife; it became too small and too narrow only when it had to accommodate the Emperor Napoleon, the empress, and their court-attendants and suite.

But if the Castle Malmaison was not large, the park which surrounded it was all the larger and handsomer, and, with its shady walks, its wondrous beds of flowers, its majestic avenues, its splendid groves and lawns, it had for Josephine pleasures and joys ever new and fresh; and it furnished her, moreover, with the welcome opportunity of following the inclinations of her youth amidst the flowers, birds, trees, and plants.

Josephine loved botany; it was natural that she should endeavor to collect together in Malmaison the most beautiful plants and flowers, and to arrange them in this her little earthly paradise. She enlisted the most able architects and the most skilful gardeners, and, under their direction, with the hands of hundreds of workmen, there soon arose one of the most beautiful hot-houses, wherein all these glories of earth, splendid flowers, and fruits of distant climes, would find a home!

Josephine herself, with her fine taste and her deep knowledge of botany, directed all these arrangements and improvements; the builders as well as the gardeners had to submit their plans for her approbation, and it was not seldom that her keen, practised eye discovered in them defects which her ingenuity at once found means to correct.

In Malmaison, Josephine created around her a new world, a quiet paradise of happiness, where she could dream, with blissful cheerfulness and with all the youthful energy of her heart, of a peaceful future, of delightful contentment, in the quiet enjoyment of Nature and of home.

But the old world outside did not cease its own march;

it fought its battles, spun its intrigues, and continued its hostilities. Josephine could not withdraw herself from this old world; she dared not place the paradise of Malmaison as a wall of partition between her and the wild stir and tumult of Paris; she had to rush away from the world of innocence, from this country-life, into the whirlpool of the agitated, restless life of Paris.

Bonaparte had made it a duty for her to watch his friends as well as his foes, and there were then happening in Paris events which appeared to the wife of General Bonaparte worthy of close observation. His long absence had diminished the number of his friends, and at the same time gave strength to and increased his enemies, who were ever busy to defame and vilify his heroic deeds, and to turn them into a crime; they represented that the expedition to Egypt, notwithstanding the glorious exploits of the French army, should have had more striking results, and the louder they cried out, the more feeble and timid were the voices of his friends. The latter daily found their position becoming more precarious, for they were the moderate republicans, the supporters of the actual order of things, and of the constitution which France had adopted. Against this constitution arose, with loud cries, two hostile parties, which increased every day, and assumed toward it a more and more threatening attitude.

These parties were, on the one hand, the royalists, who saw their hopes increase every day, because the armies of the European powers, allied against France, were approaching nearer and nearer the French frontiers; and, on the other, the republicans of the past, who hoped to re-establish the old days of the Convention and of the red republic.

Both parties tried to undermine society and the existing authorities; they organized conspiracies, seditions, and tumults, and were constantly inventing new intrigues, so as to destroy the government, and set themselves up in its place.

The royalists trusted to the combined powers of the princes of Europe, with whom the exiled Bourbons were approaching; and in La Vendée the guerilla warfare had already begun against the republic.

The red republicans dreamed of re-establishing the guilotine, which was to restore France to health by delivering her from all the adversaries of the republic and bring back the glorious days of 1793; they left nothing untried to excite the people into dissatisfaction and open rebellion.

Against both parties stood the Directory, who in these days of tumult and sedition, were themselves feeble and without energy, seeking only to prolong their existence. They were satisfied to live on day by day, and shrank from every decided action which might increase the wrath of the parties or destroy the brilliant present of the mighty directors, in whose ears the title of "the five monarchs" sounded so sweetly.

In the interior of France, anarchy, with all its horrors and confusion, prevailed, and, on the frontier, its enemies were taking advantage of this anarchy to give to the republic its mortal stroke.

Turkey, Russia, the Kings of Sardinia, Naples, and Sweden, were allied with Austria, England, and Prussia, and they had begun to make immense preparations. A Russian army, led by Suwarrow, was marching toward Italy, to the help of Austria—to reconquer Lombardy. The Rastadt congress, from which a universal peace had been expected, had dissolved, and the only result was an increased enmity between Germany and France, the deputies of the latter, as they were returning home, being shamefully murdered in the open street, immediately before the gates of Rastadt, at the instigation of the Austrian Count Lehrbach.

The murder of these ambassadors became the signal for the renewal of war, which was now to be prosecuted with increased bitterness.

At this important, critical moment, when all Europe was buckling on its armor against France, which so much needed the guidance of her victorious general—at this moment, Bonaparte was not only away from Paris, but no news had been received from him for some months. Only a vague rumor was spread through Paris: "Bonaparte had fallen at the desperate attack on Acre," and this sufficed to discourage entirely his friends, and to make his enemies still more audacious and overbearing.

At first Josephine was entirely cast down by the terrible news; but afterward came the reflection, the doubt, the hope, that all this might be a rumor spread by his enemies. She hastened to Paris to obtain information from the Directory, so as to find out if there were any foundation for the report of Bonaparte's death. But the Directory had as uncertain news as Josephine herself, and the absence of information seemed to confirm its truth.

As she came one day to Barras to ask him if there were any news from the army, she heard him say to Rewbell, one of the five directors: "Here comes the wife of that hypocrite Bonaparte! If he is not dead to Europe, he is at least dead to France."

This expression proved to her that Barras himself did not believe in his death, and gave to Josephine all her energy and presence of mind. She busied herself in endeavoring to find a clew to this horrible rumor; and she found that Bonaparte's enemies had spread it, and that only those to whom his death would be welcome, and his return be objectionable, had circulated this report.

Her heart again beat with hope; she now felt, in the blissful joy which penetrated her whole being, that Bonaparte was not dead; that he lived still; that he would return home, to her great delight and to the terror of his foes. A cheerful assurance sustained her whole nature. While all those, who in the days of her happiness had rivalled each

other in assuring her of their friendship and devotedness, the Directory, the ministers, the majority of the generals, turned away from her, cold and indifferent; and her few true friends, low-spirited and depressed, bowed their heads, while her foes and those of Bonaparte scornfully said in their joy, "Now the new King of Jerusalem and Cyprus has fallen under the blows of a new savage Omar." While every thing was against her, Josephine alone was cheerful, and confidently looked into the future, for she felt and knew that the future would soon bring back her husband, her beloved.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FIRST FAITHLESSNESS.

JOSEPHINE'S prophetic heart had not deceived her. Bonaparte lived! But his was a life of danger, of constantly renewed battles and hardships—a life in which he had constantly to guard against not only enemies, but also against sickness.

Bonaparte had traversed the deserts with his army, visited the pyramids, conquered Cairo, and, in warmly-contested and fearful combats, had defeated and subdued the Mussulman. But these numerous victories had been followed by some defeats, and all his successes were more than counterbalanced by the fruitless storming of the impregnable Acre, and the failure to conquer Syria. The English admiral, Sidney Smith, with his vessels, anchored in the harbor of Acre, protected the besieged, and constantly provided them with provisions and ammunition, and so efficiently supported the pacha and his mercenary European soldiers, that Bonaparte, after two months of fruitless efforts, abandoned the siege, on the 10th of May, 1799, and retreated into Egypt.

This is not, however, the place to recall the stupendous enterprises of Bonaparte, which remind one of the deeds of the heroes and demi-gods of ancient Greece, or the nursery tales of extraordinary beings.

His heroic deeds are engraven on history's page: there can be read the wondrous events of his Egyptian campaign, of his march through the wilderness, of the capture of Cairo, of his successful battles of Aboukir and Tabor, which led the heroic General Kleber, forgetting all rivalry, to embrace Bonaparte, exclaiming: "General Bonaparte, you are as great as the world, but the world is too small for you!"

There, also, one can read of the cruel massacre of three thousand captive Mussulmen, of the revolt of Cairo; there are depicted the blood-stained laurels which Bonaparte won in this expedition, the original plan of which seems to have been conceived in the brain of one who was at once a demi-god and an adventurer.

We leave, therefore, to history the exclusive privilege of narrating Bonaparte's career as a warrior; our task is with something superior—with his thoughts, feelings, and sufferings, in the days of his Egyptian campaign. It is not with the soldier, the captain, or his plans of battle, that we have to do, but with the man, and especially with the husband of Josephine—the woman who for his sake suffered, was full of solicitude, contended for him, and struggled with love and loyalty, while he fought only with sword and cannon.

It is true, Bonaparte also had to suffer, and his anxieties for the success of his plans did not alone hang heavily on his heart, while with his army he besieged the impregnable Acre. At this very time his heart received a deep wound from his friend and confidant Junot, who drove the sting of jealousy into his sensitive heart. It is the privilege of friendship to pass by in silence nothing which calumny or ill-will may imagine or circulate, but truly to make known to our