

awful a nature that he will deem it necessary to make an example of extreme severity. The supreme magistrate was not alone exposed to danger—many others were killed and wounded by this sad event, and it is this which will make the consul severe and implacable.

“I conjure you, then, citizen minister, to avoid extending your researches too far, and not always to spy out new persons who might be compromised by this horrible machine. Must France, which has been held in terror by so many executions, have to sigh over new victims? Is it not much more important to appease the minds of the people than to excite them by new terrors? Finally, would it not be advisable, so soon as the originators of this awful crime are captured, to have compassion and mercy upon subordinate persons who may have been entangled in it through dangerous sophisms and fanatical sentiments?”

“Barely vested with the supreme authority, ought not the first consul study to win the hearts rather than to make slaves of his people? Moderate, therefore, by your advice, where in his first excitement he may be too severe. To punish is, alas, too often necessary! To pardon is, I trust, still more. In a word, be a protector to the unfortunate who, through their confession or repentance, have already made in part penance for their guilt.

“As I myself, without any fault on my part, nearly lost my life in the revolution, you can easily understand that I take an interest in those who can perhaps be saved without thereby endangering my husband’s life, which is so precious to me and to France. I therefore earnestly desire that you will make a distinction between the leaders of this conspiracy and those who, from fear or weakness, have been seduced into bringing upon themselves a portion of the guilt. As a woman, a wife, a mother, I can readily feel for all the heart-rending agonies of those families which appeal to me.

“Do what you possibly can, citizen minister, to diminish their numbers; you will thereby spare me much anxiety. I can never be deaf to the cries of distress from the needy; but in this matter you can do a great deal more than I can, and therefore pardon what may seem strange in my pleadings with you.

“Believe in my gratitude and loyalty of sentiment.

“JOSEPHINE.” *

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MALMAISON.

IN the Tuileries the first consul, with his wife, resided in all the pomp and dignity of his new office. There he was the sovereign, the commander; there he ruled, and, like a king, all bowed to him; the people humbled themselves and recognized him as their master.

In the Tuileries etiquette and the stiff pomp of a princely court prevailed more and more. Bonaparte required of his wife that she should there represent the dignity and the grandeur of her new position; that she should appear as the first, the most exalted, and the most unapproachable of women. In the Tuileries there were no more evenings of pleasant social gatherings, of joyous conversation with friends whom affection made equals, and who, in love and admiration, recognizing Bonaparte’s ascendancy, brought him of their own free choice their esteem and high consideration. Now, it was all honor and duty; now, the friends of the past were servants who, for duty’s sake, had to be subservient to their master, and abide by the rules of etiquette, otherwise the frown on their lofty ruler’s brow would bring them back within their bounds.

* Ducrest, “Mémoires,” vol. iii., p. 231.

Josephine was pained at these limits set to her personal freedom—at these claims of etiquette, which did not permit her friends to remain at her side, but strove to exalt above them the wife of the first consul. Her sense of modesty ever accepted the pleasant, genial household affections as more agreeable and more precious than the burdensome representations, levees, and the tediousness of ceremonial receptions; her sense of modesty longed for the quiet and repose of retirement, and she was happy when, at the close of the court festivities, she could return to Malmaison, there to enjoy the coming of spring, the blossoming of summer, and the glorious beauty of autumn with its manifold colors.

In Malmaison were centered all her joys and pleasures. There she could satisfy all the inclinations of her heart, all the fancies of her imagination, all the wants of her mind; there she could be the tender wife and mother, and the faithful friend; there she could receive, without the annoyance of etiquette, men of learning and art; there she could cultivate the soil and devote herself to botany, her favorite study, and to her flowers, the dearest and most faithful friends of her whole life.

Josephine sought for and found in Malmaison her earthly paradise; there she was happy, and the care and the secret anguish which in Paris wove around her heart its network, and every now and then whispered the nefarious words of divorce and separation, followed her not in the beautiful and friendly Malmaison; she left all this in Paris with the stiff Madame Etiquette, who once in the Tuileries had poisoned the existence of the Queen Marie Antoinette, and now sought to intrude herself upon the consulate as an ill-tempered sovereign.

But in Malmaison there was no etiquette, none of the dignified coldness of court-life. There you were allowed to laugh, to jest, and to be happy. In Malmaison the first

consul laid aside his gravity; there his gloomy brow brightened, and he became again General Bonaparte, the lover of his Josephine, the confidential companion of his friends, the harmless individual, who seemed to have nothing to require from Heaven but the happiness of the passing hour, and who could laugh at a joke with the same guilelessness as any other child of the people who never deemed it necessary to cultivate a close intimacy with the grave and gloomy Madame Politique.

It is true Malmaison was not Bonaparte's sole country residence. The city of Paris had presented him with the pleasure-castle of St. Cloud, the same which Louis XVI. gave to his wife, and where, to the very great annoyance of the proud Parisians, she had for the first time engraven on the regulation-tablets, at the entrance of the park, the fatal words—"De par la Reine."

Now this royal mansion of pleasure belonged to the first consul of the republic; it was his summer residence, but there he was still the consul, the first magistrate, and the representative of France; and he had there to give receptions, hold levees, receive the ministers, councillors of state, and the foreign ambassadors, and appear in all the pomp and circumstance of his position.

But in Malmaison his countenance and his being were changed. Here he was the cheerful man, enjoying life; he was the joyous companion, the modest land-owner, who with genial delight surveyed the produce of his soil, and even calculated how much profit it could bring him.

"The first consul in Malmaison," said the English minister, Fox, "the first consul in St. Cloud, and the first consul in the Tuileries, are three different persons, who together form that great and wonderful idea; I should exceedingly like to be able to represent exactly after nature these three portraits; they must be very much alike, and yet very different."

It is certain, however, that of these three portraits that of the first consul in Malmaison was the most amiable, and that of the first consul of the Tuileries the most imposing.

In Malmaison Bonaparte's countenance was cheerful and free from care; in the Tuileries he was grave and dignified. On his clouded brow were enthroned great designs; from the deep, dark eyes shot lightnings ready to fire a world—to erect or destroy kingdoms. In Malmaison these eyes with cheerful brilliancy reposed on Josephine; his otherwise earnest lips welcomed there the beloved of his heart with merry pleasantry and spirited raillery; there he loved to see Josephine in simple, modest toilet; and if in the lofty halls of the Tuileries he exacted from the wife of the first consul a brilliant toilet, the bejewelled magnificence of the first lady of France, he was delighted when in Malmaison he saw coming through the green foliage the wife of General Bonaparte in simple white muslin, with a laughing countenance; and with her sweet voice, which he still considered as the finest music he ever heard, she bade welcome to her husband who here was changed into her tender lover.

In Malmaison, Bonaparte would even put off his general's uniform, and, in his plain gray coat of a soldier, walk through the park in the neighborhood, resting on the arm of his confidant, Duroc, and would begin a friendly conversation with the first farmer he met, perfectly satisfied when in the little man with the gray tightly-buttoned coat, no one suspected or imagined to see the first consul of the republic.

Every Saturday the first consul hastened to the chateau to pass there, as he said, his Sunday, his day of rest; and only on Monday morning did he return to Paris, "to take up his chain again."

How genial and happy were these days of rest! How eagerly did Josephine labor to make them days of felicity for Bonaparte! how ingenious to prepare for him new fes-

tivities and new surprises! and how her eyes brightened when she had succeeded in making Bonaparte joyous and contented!

If the weather was favorable, the whole company in Malmaison, the young generals, with their beautiful, young, and lively wives, who surrounded Bonaparte and Josephine, and of whom a great number belonged to their family, made promenades through the park, then they seated themselves on a fine spot to repeat stories or to indulge in harmless sociable games, in which Bonaparte with the most cheerful alacrity took part. Even down to the game of "catch" and to that of "room-renting" did Bonaparte condescend to play; and as Marie Antoinette with her husband and her court played at blindman's-buff in the gardens of Trianon, so Bonaparte was pleased on the lawns of Malmaison to play at "room-renting."

How often after a dark, cloudy morning, when suddenly at noon the skies would become clear and the sunshine break through the clouds, would Bonaparte's countenance gladden with all the spirit of a school-boy, in the midst of holidays, and, throwing off his coat, laughingly exclaim, "Now come, one and all, and let us rent the room!"

And then on the large, open lawn, surrounded on all sides by tall trees, the first consul with his wife, his generals and their young wives, would begin the exhilarating, harmless child's-play, forgetful of all care, void of all fear, except that he should lose his tree, and that as a penniless individual having to rent a room he would have to stand in the centre before all eyes, just as first consul he stood before all eyes in the centre of France, and struggled for a place the importance and title of which were known only to his silent soul.

But in Malmaison, at the game of "room to let," Bonaparte had no remembrance whatever of the ambitious wishes of the first consul; the whole world seemed to have set; the

memories of his youth passed before his eyes in such beauty, saluting him with the gracious looks of childhood, as nearly to make him an enthusiast.

How often, when on Josephine's arm, surrounded by a laughing, noisy group of friends, and walking through shady paths, on hearing the bells of the neighboring village chime their vespers, would Bonaparte suddenly interrupt the conversation and stand still to hear them! With a motion of the hand he would command silence, while he listened with a smile of grief to sounds which recalled days long gone by. "These bells remind me of the days of my boyhood," said he to Josephine; "it seems to me, when I hear them, that I am still in Brienne."

To keep alive the memories of his school-days in Brienne, he sent for one of his teachers, the Abbé Dupuis, who had been remarkably kind to him, and invited him to Malmaison, to arrange there a library, and to take charge of it; he sent also for the porter of Brienne whose wife he had so severely prohibited from entering the theatre, and made him the porter of the chateau.

In bad weather and on rainy days the whole company gathered in the large drawing-room, and found amusement in playing the various games of cards, in which Bonaparte not only took much interest, but in which he so eagerly played, that he often had recourse to apparent bungling, so as to command success. Adjoining the drawing-room, where conversation and amusements took place, was a room where the company sang and practised music, to the delight of Bonaparte, who often, when one of his favorite tunes was played, would chime in vigorously with the melody, nowise disturbed by the fact that he never could catch the right tune, and that he broke out every time into distressing discordance!

But all songs and music subsided, all plays were interrupted, when Bonaparte, excited perhaps by the approaching

twilight, or by some awakened memory, began to relate one of those tragic, fearful stories which no one could tell so well as he. Then, with arms folded behind his back, he slowly paced the drawing-room, and with sinister looks, tragic manner, and sepulchral voice, he would begin the solemn introduction of his narrative:

"When death strikes, at a distance, a person whom we love," said he, one evening, with a voice tremulous with horror, "a certain foreboding nearly always makes us anticipate the event, and the person, touched by the hand of death, appears to us at the moment we lose him on earth."

"How very sad and mournful that sounds!" sighed Josephine, as she placed both her arms on Bonaparte's shoulder, as if she would hold him, and chain him to earth, that he might not vanish away with every ghost-like form.

Bonaparte turned to her with a genial smile, and shook his head at her, so as to assure her of his existence and his love. Then he began his story with all the earnestness and tragic power of an improvisator of ancient Rome. He told how once Louis XIV., in the great gallery of Versailles, received the bulletin of the battle of Friedlingen, and how, unfolding it, he read to the assembled court the names of the slain and of the wounded. Quietness reigned in the splendidly-illuminated gallery; and the courtiers in their embroidered coats, who, ordinarily, were so full of merriment and so high-spirited, had, all at once, become thoughtful. They gathered in a circle around the monarch, from whose lips slowly, like falling tears, fell one by one the names of the killed. Here and there the cheeks of their relatives turned pale. Suddenly the Count de Beaugré saw appear, at the farther end of the gallery, stately and ghost-like, the blood-stained figure of his son, who, with eyes wide open, stared at his father, and saluted him with a slight motion of the head, and then glided away through the door. "My son is dead!" cried Count de Beaugré—and,

at the very same moment, the king uttered his name as one of the slain!"*

"Ah! may I never see such a ghost-like figure," murmured Josephine, drawing closer to her husband. "Bonaparte, promise me that you will never go to war again; that you will keep peace with all the world, so that I may have no cause of alarm!"

"And to tremble at my ghost," exclaimed Bonaparte, laughing. "Look at this selfish woman, she does not wish me a hero's death, lest I should appear to her here in the shape of a bloody placard!"

With her small bejewelled hand Josephine closed his mouth, and ordered lights to be brought; she asked Lavalette to play a lively dancing-tune, and cried out to the joyous youthful group, at the head of whom were Hortense and Eugene, to fall in for a dance.

"Nothing more charming," writes the Duchess d'Abrantes, "could be seen than a ball in Malmaison, made up as it was of the young ladies whom the military family of the first consul brought together, and who, without having the name of it, formed the court of Madame Bonaparte. They were all young, many of them very beautiful; and when this lovely group were dressed in white crape, adorned with flowers, their heads crowned with wreaths as fresh as the hues of their young, laughing, charming faces, it was indeed a bewitching sight to witness the animated and lively dance in these halls, through which walked the first consul, surrounded by the men with whom he discussed and decided the destinies of Europe."†

But the best and most exciting amusement in Malmaison was the theatre; and nothing delighted Bonaparte so much as this, where the young troop of lovers in the palace per-

* Bourrienne, "Mémoires," vol. iii., p. 225.

† Abrantes, "Mémoires," vol. iii., p. 329.

formed little operas and vaudevilles, and went through their parts with all the eagerness of real actors, perfectly happy in having the consul and his wife for audience. In Malmaison, Bonaparte abandoned himself with boundless joy to his fondness for the theatre; here he applauded with all the gusto of an amateur, laughed with the *laisser-aller* of a college-boy at the harmless jokes of the vaudevilles, and here also he took great pleasure in the dramatic performances of Eugene, who excelled especially in comic rôles.

Bonaparte had a most convenient stage constructed in Malmaison for his actors; he had the most beautiful costumes made for each new piece, and the actors Talma and Michet had to come every week to the chateau, to give the young people instruction in their parts. The ordinary actors of this theatre in the castle were Eugene and Hortense, Caroline Murat, Lauriston, M. Didelot, the prefect of the palace, some of the officers attached to the establishment, and the Count Bourrienne, the friend of Bonaparte's youth, who now had become the first secretary of the consul. The pieces which Bonaparte attended with the greatest pleasure were the "Barber of Seville," and "Mistrust and Malice." The young and amiable Hortense made an excellent Rosine in the "Barber of Seville," and Bonaparte never failed to clap his hands in hearty applause to Hortense, when Josephine with cheerful smiles would thank him, for she seemed as proud of her daughter's talent as of her husband's applause.

Bourrienne, in his memoirs, gives a faithful description of those evening theatrical performances, and of the happy life enjoyed in Malmaison; he lingers with a sober joy over those beautiful and innocent memories of other days.

"Bonaparte," says he, "found great pleasure in our dramatic entertainments; he loved to see comedies represented by those who surrounded him, and oftentimes paid us flattering compliments. Though it amused me as much as it did

the others, yet I was more than once obliged to call Bonaparte's attention to the fact that my other occupations did not give me time enough to learn my parts. He then, in his flattering way, said: 'Ah, Bourrienne, let me alone. You have so excellent a memory! You know that this is an amusement to me! You see that these performances enliven Malmaison and make it cheerful! Josephine is so fond of them! Rise a little earlier!'

"It is a fact—I sleep a great deal!"

"Allons, Bourrienne, do it to please me; you do make me laugh so heartily! Deprive me not of this pleasure. You know well that otherwise I have but few recreations."

"Ah, *parbleu!* I will not deprive you of it. I am happy to be able to contribute something to your amusement.' Consequently I rose earlier, to learn my parts.

"On the theatre days the company at Malmaison was always very large. After the performance a brilliant crowd undulated like waves in the halls of the first story. The most animated and varied conversation took place, and I can truly affirm that cheerfulness and sincerity were the life of those conversations, and their principal charm. Refreshments of all kinds were distributed, and Josephine performed the honors of those gatherings with so much amiableness and complacency that each one might believe she busied herself more with him than with any one else. At the end of the delightful soirées, which generally closed after midnight, we returned to Paris, where the cares of life awaited us."*

Time was spent not only in festivities and amusements at Malmaison, but sciences and arts also formed there a serious occupation, and it was Josephine who was the prime mover. She invited to the chateau painters, sculptors, musicians, architects, and savants of every profession, and thus to the Graces she added the Arts for companions.

* Bourrienne, "Mémoires," vol. v., p. 26.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FLOWERS AND MUSIC.

ABOVE all things, Josephine, in her retreat, devoted her time and leisure hours to botany and to her dear flowers. Alexander Lenoir, the famous architect of that day, had to assist her in enlarging the little castle of Malmaison, and to open more suitable halls for the arts and sciences. Under Josephine's direction there arose the splendid library-room resting upon columns; it was Josephine who had the beautiful gallery of paintings constructed, and also with remarkable judgment purchased a selection of the finest paintings of the great masters to adorn this gallery. Besides which, she gave to living painters orders of importance, and encouraged them to originate new pieces, that art itself might have a part in the new era of peace and prosperity, which, under the consulate, seemed to spread over France.

Alongside of the paintings Josephine adorned this gallery with the finest antique statues, with a collection of the rarest painted vases of Pompeii, and with ten paintings on cement, memorials of Grecian art, representing the nine Muses and Apollo Mersagetos. These last splendid subjects were a present which the King of Naples had given to Josephine during her residence in Italy. Always attentive not only to promote the arts, but also to help the artists and to increase their reputation, Josephine would buy some new pieces of sculpture, and give them a place in Malmaison. The two most exquisite masterpieces of Canova, "The Dancing-Girl" and "Paris," were purchased by Josephine at an enormous price for her gallery, whose chief ornament they were.

Her fondness for flowers was such that she spared neither expense nor labor to procure those worthy of Malmaison. She caused also large green-houses and hot-houses to be

constructed, the latter suited to the culture of the pineapple and of the peach. In the green-houses were found flowers and plants of every zone, and of all countries. People, knowing her taste for botany, sent her from the most remote places the choicest plants. Even the prince regent of England, the most violent and bitter enemy of the first consul, had high esteem for this taste of Josephine; and during the war, when some French ships, captured by the English, were found to have on board a collection of tropical plants for her, he had them carried with all dispatch to Madame Bonaparte.

Josephine had a lofty aim: she wanted to gather into her hot-houses all the species and families, all the varieties of the tropical plants, and she strove to accomplish this with a perseverance, a zeal, and an earnestness of which no one would have thought her indolent, soft creole nature capable. To increase her precious collection, she spared neither money nor time, neither supplications nor efforts. All travellers, all seafaring men, who came into her drawing-room were entreated to send plants to Malmaison; and even the secretary of the navy did not fail to give instructions to the captains of vessels sailing to far-distant lands to bring back plants for the wife of the first consul. If it were a matter of purchase, nothing was too expensive, and when, through her fondness for beautiful objects, Josephine's purse was exhausted, and her means curtailed, she sooner gave up the purchase of a beautiful ornament than that of a rare plant.

The hot-houses of Malmaison caused, therefore, a considerable increase in her expenses, and were a heavy burden to her treasury; and for their sake, when the day of payment came, Josephine had to receive from her husband many severe reproaches, and was forced to shed many a bitter tear. But this, perhaps, made them still dearer; no sooner were the tears dried up and the expenses covered,

than Josephine again abandoned herself with renewed zeal to her passion for collecting plants and costly studies in botany, especially since she had succeeded in winning to her person the renowned botanist and learned Bonpland, and in having him appointed superintendent of her gardens and hot-houses. It was Bonpland who cultivated Josephine's inclination for botany, and exalted her passion into a science. He filled the green-houses of Malmaison with the rarest plants, and taught Josephine at the same time their classifications and sexes, and she quickly proved herself to be a zealous and tractable pupil. She soon learned the names of the plants, as well as their family names, as classified by the naturalists; she became acquainted with their origin and their virtues, and was extremely sad and dejected when, in one of her families, a single species was wanting. But what a joy when this gap was filled! No price was too exorbitant, then, to procure the missing species; and one day she paid for a small, insignificant plant from Chili the high price of three thousand francs, filling Bonpland with ecstasy, but the emperor with deep wrath as soon as he heard it.*

Next to botany, it was music which Josephine delighted in and cultivated. Since the cares and the numerous relations of her diversified life claimed so much of her time, she had abandoned the exercises of music; and it was only at the hour of unusual serenity of mind, or of more lively recollections of the past, that she was heard singing softly one of the songs of her own native isle, even as Bonaparte himself, when he was meditating and deciding about some new campaign, would betray the drift of his thoughts by singing louder and louder the favorite melody of the day, *Marlborough s'en va-t-en guerre*. But Josephine had the satisfaction that Hortense was not only an excellent performer

* Avrillon, "Mémoires sur l'Impératrice Josephine."

on the piano and the harp, but that she could also write original compositions, whose softness and harmonious combinations made them popular throughout France. Another satisfaction was, that Eugene sang, in a fine clear voice, with great talent, and that frequently he would by his excellent singing draw even the first consul into loud expressions of admiration.

Bonaparte was not easily satisfied as regards singing; it was seldom that music elicited any commendation from him. The Italian music alone could excite his enthusiasm, and through its impassioned fervor rouse him up, or its humorous passages enliven him. Therefore Bonaparte, when consul or emperor, always patronized the Italian music in preference to any other, and he constantly and publicly expressed this liking, without considering how much he might thereby wound the French *artistes* in their ambition and love of fame. He therefore appointed an Italian to be first singer at the opera. It is true this was Maestro Pæsiello, whose operas were then making their way through Europe, and everywhere meeting with approbation. Bonaparte also was extremely fond of them, and at every opportunity he manifested to the *maestro* his good-will and approbation. But one day this commendation of Pæsiello was changed to the most stinging censure. It was on the occasion of the first representation of Pæsiello's *Zingari in Fiera*. The first consul and his wife were in their *loge*, and to show to the public how much he honored and esteemed the composer, he had invited Pæsiello to attend the performance in his *loge*.

Bonaparte followed the performance with the most enthusiastic demonstrations of gratification; he heartily applauded each part, and paid to Pæsiello compliments which were the more flattering since every one knew that the lips which uttered them were not profuse in their use. A tenor part had just ended, and its effect had been remarkable.

The audience was full of enthusiasm. Bonaparte, who by his hearty applause had given the signal to a storm of cheers, turned toward Pæsiello, and, offering him his hand, exclaimed:

"Truly, my dear friend, the man who has composed this melody can boast of being the first composer in Europe!"

Pæsiello became pale, his whole body trembled, and, with stammering voice, he said:

"General, this melody is from Cimarosa. I have placed it in my opera merely to please the singers."

The first consul shrugged his shoulders.

"I am sorry, my dear sir," said he, "but I cannot recall what I have said."

The next day, however, he sent to the composer of the opera, as an acknowledgment of his esteem, a magnificent present, with which he no doubt wished to heal the pain which he had unwittingly caused the *maestro*. But Pæsiello possessed a temper easily wounded, and the more so since he considered himself as the first and greatest composer in the world, and was sincere in the opinion that others could compose good music, but that his alone was grand and distinguished.

Bonaparte's present could not, therefore, heal the wound which the praise of Cimarosa's melody had inflicted, and this wound was soon to be probed deeper, and become fatal to Pæsiello. Another new opera from Pæsiello, *Proserpina*, was to be represented. The first consul, who was anxious to secure for his *protégé* a brilliant success, had given orders to bring it out in the most splendid style; the most beautiful decorations and the richest costumes had been provided, and a stage erected for a ballet, on which the favorite ballet-leaders of Paris were to practise their art.

The mighty first consul was, on the evening of the first performance of the opera of *Proserpina*, to learn the lesson,

that there exists a power which will not be bound in fetters, and which is stronger and more influential than the dictates of the mighty—the power of public opinion. This stood in direct opposition to the first consul, by the voiceless, cold silence with which it received Pæsiello's piece. Bonaparte might applaud as heartily as he pleased, and that might elicit an echo from the group of his favorites, but the public remained unmoved, and Bonaparte had the humiliation to see this opera, notwithstanding his approbation, prove a complete failure. He felt as nervous and excited as the composer himself, for he declared loudly and angrily that the French knew nothing about music, and that it was necessary to teach them that the Italians alone understood the art of composition.

To teach this to the French the opera of *Proserpina* was to be repeated until the mind of the public should have been educated to its beauty, and they had been forced to acknowledge it. A decided warfare ensued between this opera and the public, each party being determined to have its own way; the authorities persevered in having the performance repeated, and the public kept away from it with equal obstinacy. The latter, however, had the advantage in this case, for they could not be forced to attend where they were unwilling to go, and so they won the victory, and the authorities had to yield.

Pæsiello, touched to the quick by the failure of *Proserpina*, resigned his position as leader, and left Paris to return to Italy. The question now was, how to fill this important and honorable position. The Parisians were excited about this nomination, and divided into two parties, each of which defended its candidate with the greatest zeal, and maintained that he would be the one who would receive Bonaparte's appointment. The candidates of these two parties were the Frenchman Méhul and the Italian Cherubini. Those who formed the party of Cherubini calculated

especially on Bonaparte's well-known preference for Italian music. They knew that, though he was much attached to Méhul, whom he had known before the expedition to Egypt, and had shown him many favors, yet he had often expressed his contempt for French music, and was committed against him by the very fact of his maintaining that the Italians alone understood the art of musical composition.

Méhul had for a long time endured in silence the criticisms of Bonaparte; he had patiently returned no answer when he repeated to him: "Science, and only science—that is all the French musicians understand; my dear sir, grace, melody, and joyousness, are unknown to you Frenchmen and to the Germans; the Italians alone are masters here."

One day Méhul, having become tired of these constant discouraging remarks, resolved to let the first consul, who so often gave him bitter pills to swallow, have a taste of them himself.

He went, therefore, to his friend, the poet Marsollier, and begged him to write an extremely lively and extravagant piece, whose design would be absurd enough to make it pass as the work of some Italian pamphlet-writer, and at the same time he enjoined the most profound secrecy.

Marsollier complied willingly with the wishes of his friend, and after a few days he brought him the text for the small opera *Irato*. With the same alacrity did Méhul sit down to the task of composing, and when the work was done, Marsollier went to the committee of the comic opera to tell them he had just received from Italy a score whose music was so extraordinary that he was fully convinced of its success, and had therefore been to the trouble, notwithstanding the weakness and foolishness of the *libretto*, to translate the text into French. The committee tried the score, was enchanted with the music, and was fully convinced of the brilliant success of the little opera, inasmuch as the strange and lively text was well adapted to excite the

hilarity and the merriment of the public. The first singers of the opera were rivals for the parts; all the newspapers published the pompous advertisement that in a short time would be performed at the *Opéra Comique* a charming, entrancing opera, the maiden piece of a young Italian.

Finally its first performance was announced; the first consul declared that he and his wife would attend, and he invited Méhul, whom he liked to tease and worry, because he loved him from his heart, to attend the performance in his *loge*.

"It will undoubtedly be a mortification to you, my poor friend," said he, laughing; "but perhaps when you hear this enchanting music, so different from that of the French, you will imitate it, and cease composing."

Méhul replied with a bow; he then began to excuse himself from accompanying the first consul to the theatre; and it was only after Bonaparte and Josephine had pressed him very much, that he accepted the invitation, and went with them to their *loge*.

The opera began, and, immediately after the first melody, Bonaparte applauded and expressed his admiration. There never had been any thing more charming—never had the French written music with so much freshness, elegance, or so naturally. Bonaparte continued his praise, and oftentimes repeated: "It is certain there is nothing superior to Italian music."

At last the opera ended amid a real storm of applause; and, with their enthusiasm at the highest pitch, the audience claimed to know the names of the poet and of the composer. After a long pause the curtain rose and the registrar appeared; he made the three customary bows, and in a loud voice named Marsollier as the author and Méhul as the composer of the opera *Irato*.

The audience received this news with an unceasing storm of applause. They, like the consul and the singers

who had taken part in the opera, knew nothing of the mystification, so well had the secret been kept.

Josephine turned smilingly to Bonaparte, and with her own charming grace offered her hand to Méhul and thanked him for the twofold enjoyment he had that day prepared for her, by furnishing her his entrancing opera, and by having prepared a little defeat of Bonaparte, that traitor to his country, who dared prefer the Italian music to the French.

Bonaparte himself looked at the affair on its bright side; he had enjoyed the opera; he had laughed; he was satisfied, and consequently he overlooked the deceitful surprise.

"Conquer me always in this manner!" said he, laughing, to Méhul, "and I shall enjoy both your fame and my amusement."

The friends of Cherubini thought of this little event when the question arose as to the appointment to the situation of first singer at the Grand Opera, and they therefore did not hesitate to wager that Cherubini would be appointed, since he was an Italian.

But they knew not that Bonaparte had pardoned Méhul, and frequently joked with him, whilst he ever grumbled at Cherubini on account of an expression which the latter had once allowed himself to use against General Bonaparte.

Bonaparte had conversed with Cherubini after a representation of one of his operas, and, while he congratulated him, he however added that this opera did not please him as much as the other pieces of Cherubini—that he thought it somewhat sober and scientific, and that he missed in it the accustomed richness of the *maestro's* melodies. This criticism wounded Cherubini as if pierced by a dagger, and with the irritable vehemence of an Italian he replied: "General, busy yourself in winning battles—that is your

trade ; but leave me to practise mine, about which you know nothing."

The Consul Bonaparte had neither forgotten nor pardoned Cherubini's answer ; and, despite his fondness for Italian music, he was resolved to give to Méhul the position vacated by Pæsiello.

Josephine approved entirely of this choice, and, in order to witness Méhul's joy, she invited him to Malmaison, that the consul might there inform him of his appointment. How great, however, was her and Bonaparte's surprise, when Méhul, instead of being delighted with this distinguished appointment, positively refused to accept it !

"I can accept this position only under one condition," said Méhul, "which is, that I may be allowed to divide it with my friend Cherubini."

"Do not speak to me about him," exclaimed Bonaparte, with animation ; "he is a coarse man, and I cannot tolerate him."

"He may have had the misfortune to displease you," replied Méhul, eagerly, "but he is a master to us all, and especially as regards sacred music. He now is in a very inferior position ; he has a large family, and I sincerely desire to reconcile him to you."

"I repeat to you that I do not wish to know any thing about him."

"In that case I must decline the position," said Méhul, gravely, "and nothing will alter my resolution. I am a member of the Institute—Cherubini is not ; I do not wish it to be said that I have misused the good-will with which you honor me for the sake of confiscating to my profit every situation, and of despoiling a man of reputation of the reward to which he is most justly entitled."

And Méhul, notwithstanding Josephine's intercession and Bonaparte's ill-will, remained firm in his decision ; he would not accept the honorable and distinguished position

of first singer at the Grand Opera ; and Bonaparte, after expressing his determination, would not change it. Neither would he confer upon Cherubini the honor refused by Méhul. He therefore commissioned Josephine to name a successor to Pæsiello ; and she went to Madame de Montesson, to confer with her on the matter.

Madame de Montesson could suggest no definite plan, but she told Josephine of a French composer, of the name of Lesueur, who, notwithstanding his great talents, lived in his native city of Paris poor and unknown, and who had not succeeded in having his opera, "The Bards," represented at the Grand Opera, simply on the ground that he was a Frenchman, and that every one knew Bonaparte's strange aversion to French music.

Josephine's generous heart at once took sides with Lesueur ; her exquisite tact taught her that the public ought to know that the first consul would not consult his own personal gratification, when the question was to render justice to a Frenchman. She therefore recommended to her husband, with all her ability, the poor composer Lesueur, who was unknown to fame, and lost in obscurity ; she represented his appointment as such an act of generosity and of policy, that Bonaparte acceded to her wishes at once, and appointed Lesueur to the office of first master of the Grand Opera.

And Josephine had the pleasure of seeing that the new opera-leader justified her expectations. His opera, "The Bards," was naturally brought into requisition ; it had a brilliant and unexampled success, and even Bonaparte, at the first representation, forgot his prejudices against French music, and applauded quite as heartily as if it had been Italian.