

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PRELUDE TO THE EMPIRE.

THE sun of happiness which for Josephine seemed to shine so brightly over Malmaison, had nevertheless its long shadows and its dark specks; even her gracious countenance was obscured, her heart filled with sad forebodings, and her bosom stung as if by scorpions hidden under flowers.

Josephine had in her immediate circle violent and bitter enemies, who were ever busy in undermining the influence which she possessed over her husband, to steal from his heart the love he cherished for her, and to remove from his side the woman who, by her presence, kept them in the shade, and who wielded or destroyed the influence which they desired to have over him.

These enemies were the brothers and especially the sisters of Bonaparte. Among the brothers of the first consul, Lucien showed to his sister-in-law the most violent and irreconcilable enmity. He left no means untried to do her injury, and to convert her into an object of suspicion, and this because he was convinced that Josephine was the prime cause of the hostile sentiments of Napoleon against him, and because he believed that, Josephine once out of the way, Napoleon's ear would be open to conviction, and that he, Lucien, the most powerful citizen, next to his brother, would be the second "first consul." He was not aware that Napoleon's keen eagle eye had fathomed his ambitious heart; that he was the one who kept Lucien away, because he mistrusted him, because he feared his ambition, and even looked upon him as capable of the bold design of casting Napoleon aside, and setting himself up in his place. Lucien was unaware of the influence which Josephine frequently exerted over the mind of the first consul, in favor of himself; that it was she who had pacified Napoleon's

anger at Lucien's marriage, contracted without his consent, and prevented him from annulling it violently. The other brothers of Napoleon, influenced, perhaps, by the enmity of Lucien, were also disaffected toward their sister-in-law, and of them all, only Louis, the youngest, the one who loved the first consul most tenderly and most sincerely, showed toward her due respect and affection.

His three sisters were still more active in their opposition. Constantly quarrelling among themselves, they, however, united heartily in the common feeling of hatred to Josephine. It was she who stood in their way, who every day excited anew their anger by the position she held at Napoleon's side, and in virtue of which the three sisters were thrust into the background. Josephine, the wife of the first consul, was the one to whom France made obeisance, upon whom the ambassadors of foreign powers first waited, and afterward upon the sisters of the first consul. It was Josephine who took the precedence in solemn ceremonies, and to whom, by Bonaparte's commands, they had to manifest respect. And this woman, who by her eminence placed the sisters of Bonaparte in an inferior position, was not of nobler or more distinguished blood than they; she was not young, she was not beautiful, she was not even able to give birth to a child, for which her husband so intensely longed.

The three sisters might have been submissive to the daughter of a prince, they might have conceded to her the right of precedence, but the widow of the Viscount de Beauharnais was not superior to them in rank or birth; she was far inferior to them in beauty and youth—and yet they had to give way to her, and see her take the first place!

From these sentiments of jealousy and envy sprang the enmity which the three sisters of Bonaparte, Madame Elise Baccocchi, Madame Pauline Borghese, and Madame Caroline Murat, cherished against Josephine, and which her gentle words and kind heart could never assuage.

Josephine was in their way—she must therefore fall. Such is the key to the right understanding of the conduct of the three beautiful sisters of Napoleon toward the wife of their brother. In their violence they disregarded all propriety, and shrank from no calumny or malice to accomplish their ends. It was a constant warfare with intrigues and malicious suspicions. Every action of Josephine was observed, every step was watched, in the hope of finding something to render her suspicious to her husband. On every occasion the three sisters besieged him with complaints concerning the lofty and proud demeanor of Josephine, and ridiculed him about his old, childless wife, who stood in the way of his growing fame! Though Bonaparte in these conflicts always sided with Josephine against his sisters, yet there probably remained in his heart a sting from the ridicule which they had directed against him.

This hostility of the Bonaparte family was not unknown to Josephine; her soul suffered under these ceaseless attacks, her heart was agonized at the thought that the efforts of her sisters-in-law might finally succeed in withdrawing from her the love of her husband. She was persuaded that even in the Bonaparte family she needed a protector, that she must look for one among the brothers, so as to counteract the enmity of the sisters; and she chose for this Louis Bonaparte. She entreated Napoleon to give to his young, beloved brother the hand of her daughter Hortense. It would be a new bond chaining Bonaparte to her—a new fortress for her love—if he would but make her daughter his sister-in-law, and his brother her son-in-law.

Napoleon did not oppose her wishes; he consented that Hortense should be married to his brother. It is true the young people were not consulted; for the first time, Josephine's selfishness got the better of her love for her child—she sacrificed the welfare of her daughter to secure her own happiness.

But Hortense loved another, yet she yielded to the entreaties and tears of her mother, and became the wife of this laconic, timid young man, whose meagre, unpretending appearance resembled so little the ideal which her maidenly heart had pictured of her future husband.

Louis on his side had not the slightest inclination for Hortense; he never would have chosen her for his wife, for their characters were too different; their inclinations and wishes were not in sympathy with each other. But through obedience to the wishes of his brother, he accepted the proffered hand of Josephine's daughter, and became the husband of the beautiful, blond-haired Hortense de Beauharnais.

In February, of the year 1802, the marriage of the young couple took place, and this family event was celebrated with the most magnificent festivities. Josephine's joy and happiness were complete—she had thrown a bridge over the abyss, and was now secure against the hostilities of her sisters-in-law, by giving up her own daughter.

Every thing was resplendent with beauty and joy at these festivities; every thing wore an appearance of happiness; only the countenances of the newly-married couple were grave and sad, and their deep melancholy contrasted strikingly with the happiness of which they themselves were the cause. Adorned with diamonds and flowers, Hortense appeared to be a stranger to all the pomp which surrounded her, and to be occupied only with her own sad communings. Louis Bonaparte was pale and grave, like Hortense; he seldom addressed a word to the young wife that the orders of his brother had given him; and she avoided her husband's looks, perhaps to hinder him from reading there the indifference and dislike she felt for him.*

But Josephine was happy, for she knew the noble, faith-

* "Mémoires sur l'Impératrice Josephine, la Cour de Navarre," etc., par Mlle. Ducrest, vol. i., p. 49.

ful, and generous spirit of the man to whom she had given her daughter; and she trusted that the two young hearts, now that they were linked together, would soon love one another. She hoped much more from this alliance; she hoped not only to find in it a shield against domestic animosities, but also to give to her husband, even if indirectly, the children he so much desired—for the offspring of his brother and the daughter of his Josephine would be nearly the same as his own, and they could adopt and love them as such. This was Josephine's hope, the dream of her happiness, when she gave her daughter in marriage to the brother of her husband.

The fact that the first consul was childless was not only a family solicitude, it was also a political question. The people themselves had changed the face of affairs, they had by solemn vote decided to confer the consulate for life upon Napoleon, who had previously been elected for ten years only. In other words, the French people had chosen Bonaparte for their master and ruler, and he now lacked but the title to be king. Every one felt and knew that this consulate for life was but the prelude to royalty; that the golden laurel-wreath of the first consul would soon be converted into a golden crown, so as to secure to France an enduring peace, and to make firm its political situation.

With her keen political instinct, Josephine trembled at the thought that the King or Emperor Bonaparte would have to establish for himself a dynasty—that he would have to appease the apprehensions of France by offering to the nation a son who would be his legitimate heir and successor. Thus was the subject of divorce kept hanging over her head until the conviction was forced upon her mind that some day Napoleon would be led into sacrificing his love to politics. Josephine was conscious of it, and consequently the hopes of Napoleon's future greatness, which so pleased his brothers and sisters, only made her sorrowful,

and she therefore entreated Bonaparte with tender appeal to remain content with the high dignity he already possessed, and not to tempt fate, nor to allow it to bear him up to a dizzy height, from which the stormy winds of adversity might the more easily prostrate him.

Bonaparte listened to her with a smile, and generally in silence. Once only he replied to her: "Has not your prophetess in Martinique told you that one day you would be more than a queen?"

"And the prophecy is already realized," exclaimed Josephine. "The wife of the consul for life is more than a queen, for her husband is the elect of thirty millions of hearts!" Bonaparte laughed, and said nothing.

Another time Josephine asked him—"Now, Bonaparte, when are you going to make me Empress of the Gauls?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "What an idea," said he; "the little Josephine an empress!"

Josephine answered him with the words of Corneille—"Le premier qui fut roi fut un soldat heureux" (the first king was a successful soldier); and she added, "The wife of this fortunate soldier shares his rank."

He placed his small, white hand, adorned with rings, under her chin, and gazed at her with a deep, strange look.

"Now, Josephine," said he, after a short pause, "your successful soldier is only, for the present, consul for life, and you are sharing his rank. Be careful, then, that the wife of the first consul surrounds herself with all the brilliancy and the pomp which besem her dignity. No more economy, no more modest simplicity! The industry of France is at a low ebb—we must make it rise. We must give receptions; we must prove to France that the court of a consul can be as splendid as that of a king. You understand what pomp is—none better than you! Now show yourself brilliant, magnificent, so that the other ladies may

imitate you. But, no foreign stuffs! Silk and velvet from the fabrics of Lyons!"

"Yes," said Josephine, with charming tenderness, "and when afterward my bills become due, you cut them down—you find them too high."

"I only cut down what is too exorbitant," said Bonaparte, laughing. "I have no objection for you to give to the manufacturers any amount of work and profit, but I do not wish them to cheat you."*

Henceforth, the consulate began gradually to exhibit a splendor and pomp which were behind no princely court, and which relegated, amid the dark legends of the fabulous past, the fraternity and the equality of the republic. The absence of pretension, and the simplicity of Malmaison, were now done away with; everywhere the consul for life was followed by the splendors of his dignity, and everywhere Josephine was accompanied by her court.

For now she had a court, and an anteroom, with all its intrigues and flatteries; and its conspiracies already wove their chains around the consul and his wife. It was not suddenly, it was not spontaneously, that this court of the first consul was formed; two years were required for its organization—two years of unceasing labor on the new code of regulations, which etiquette dictated from the remembrances of the past to the palace-officers of the Consul Bonaparte. "How was this in times past? What was the practice?" Such were the constant questions in the interior of the Tuileries, and for the answers they appealed to Madame de Montesson, to the old courtiers, the servants and adherents of royalty. Instead of creating every thing new, they turned by degrees to the usages and manners of the past. Always and in all countries have there been seen at courts caricatures and persons of ill-mannered awkwardness; at the

* Abrantes, "Mémoires," vol. iv.

opening of the court of the first consul it is probable that these existed, and appeared still more strange to those who had been used to the manners, traditions, and language of the ancient court of Versailles. Their awkwardness, however, was soon overcome; and Josephine understood so well the rare art of presiding at a court establishment—she was such an accomplished mistress of refined manners and of noble deportment—she united to the perfect manners of the old nobility the most exquisite adroitness, and she knew so well how to adapt all these advantages to every new circumstance—that soon every one bowed to her sovereignty and submitted to her laws.

From the glittering halls of the Tuileries there soon disappeared the sword and the uniform, to be replaced by the gold-embroidered dress, the silk stockings, and the *chapeau bras*; and on the glassy floors of the Tuileries generals and marshals appeared as fine cavaliers, who, submitting to the rules of etiquette, left behind with their regiments the coarse language of the camp. Many of these young generals and heroes had married the beautiful but impoverished daughters of the aristocrats of old monarchical France. These young women, who were the representatives of the ancient noblesse, brought to the Tuileries the traditions of their mothers, and distinguished themselves by the ease of their courtly deportment and their graceful manners; and they thus unconsciously became the teachers of the other young women, who, like their husbands, owed their aristocratic name only to the sword and to their fresh laurels, and not to ancient escutcheons.

In the Tuileries and in St. Cloud there were reception-days, audience-days, and great and small levees, at which were assembled all that France possessed of rank, name, and fame, and where the ambassadors of all the powers accredited at the court of the consul, where all the higher clergy and the pope's nuncio, appeared in full dress.

Bonaparte ventured to remove still further from the landmarks of the revolution, and from its so-called conquests. He restored to France the church; he reopened the temples of religion, and he also gave back to the people their priests.

Just as in the days of old monarchical France, every Sunday, and at every festival, a solemn mass was said at St. Cloud; and in the glass gallery on the way to the chapel, Bonaparte received petitions and granted short audiences. France, with the instinct of its old inclinations and habits, readily returned to this new order of things; and even those who once had with enthusiasm saluted the Goddess of Reason, went now, with hands joined in prayer and eyes bent low, to Notre Dame, to offer again their supplications to the God of Love.

Every thing seemed to return to the old track, every thing was as in the days preceding the revolution—the re-establishment of the throne, the national, willing approbation that the republic had become a monarchy, was, however, still wanting.

Finally, on the 18th of May, 1804, France spoke out the decisive word, and, by the voice of its representatives the senators, it offered to Bonaparte the crown, and requested him to ascend as emperor the throne of France.

Napoleon acceded to these wishes, and, as the senate, in a ceremonious procession, marshalled by Cambacérès, came to St. Cloud to communicate to Bonaparte the wish of France, and to offer to him and to Josephine the dignities of an empire, he accepted it without surprise, and apparently without joy, and allowed himself to be proclaimed **NAPOLÉON, THE FIRST EMPEROR OF THE FRENCH.**

On this memorable day, after Cambacérès, in the name of the senate and of France, had addressed the first consul as the actual emperor, he turned to Josephine, who, with that unparalleled admixture of grandeur, grace, and tender

womanly beauty, which were all so especially her own, was present at this audience at Napoleon's side.

“Madame,” said Cambacérès, “there remains yet to the senate a pleasant duty to perform: to bring to your imperial majesty the homage of its respect and the expression of gratitude of the French people. Yes, madame, the public sentiment acknowledges the good which you are ever performing; that you are always accessible to the unfortunate; that you use your influence with the chief magistrate only to diminish evil, and to procure a hearing to those who seek it; and that your majesty with this well-doing combines the most amiable tenderness, rendering thankfulness a pleasant duty. These noble qualities of your majesty foretell that the name of the Empress Josephine will be a watchword of trust and hope; and, as the virtues of Napoleon will ever be to his followers an example to teach them the difficult art of government, so also, the lively remembrance of your goodness will teach to their honorable wives that to strive to dry the tear is the surest means of ruling the heart. The senate deems itself happy in being the first to congratulate your imperial majesty, and he who has the honor of addressing you these sentiments in the name of the senate, dares trust that you will ever number him among your most faithful servants.”

It was, then, decided! France had accepted her master, and Cambacérès in his solemn address had already marked out the situation of France and of her rulers. Bonaparte and Josephine were now their imperial majesties, the senators were their most faithful servants. What remained to the people but to call themselves “faithful subjects?”

The people, however, had made known their wishes only through the voice of the senate; it was the senators who had converted Bonaparte into the Emperor Napoleon; but the people were also to make their will known in a solemn manner; they were, through a universal public suffrage, to decide whether the imperial dignity should be given only

for life to Napoleon the First, Emperor of the French, or whether it should be hereditary in his family.

France, wearied with storms and divisions, decided with her five millions of votes for the hereditary imperial dignity in Bonaparte's family, and thus the people of France created their fourth dynasty.

Meanwhile Josephine received this new decision of the nation, not with that disquietude and care which she had formerly experienced. Bonaparte had given her the deepest and strongest proof of his love and faithfulness. He had not only withstood the pressure of his whole family, which had conjured him before his election to the empire to be divorced from his childless wife, but he had in the generosity of his love appointed his heirs and successors, and these were to be the sons of Hortense. The senate had decreed that the imperial dignity should be transmitted as a heritage to Napoleon's two brothers Joseph and Louis, and moreover they had given to Napoleon the right to choose his successors and heirs from the families of the two brothers.

Napoleon had given to Josephine the strongest proof of affection—he had declared the son of her daughter Hortense and of his brother Louis, the little Napoleon Louis, to be his successor and heir, and the idea of a divorce no longer caused apprehensions before which Josephine need tremble.

Bonaparte had appointed the sons of his brother and of Josephine's daughter as his heirs, and the heir of the new imperial throne was already born. Hortense's youth made it hopeful that she would add to the new branch of the Napoleonic dynasty new leaves and new boughs.

Josephine could now rejoice in her happiness and her glory; she could abandon herself to the new splendors of her life with all the enjoyment of her sensitive and excitable nature. She could now receive with smiles and with affable condescension the homage of France, for she was not only

empress by a nation's vote, but she was also empress by the choice of Napoleon her husband.

The brilliancy of this new and glorious horizon was soon overhung by a sombre cloud. The execution of the Duke d'Enghien threw its dark shadows from the last days of the consulate upon the truly royalist heart of Josephine; and now that heart was to receive fresh wounds through the royalists, to whom she had remained true with all the memories of youth, and in whose behalf she had so often, so zealously, and so warmly interceded with her husband.

A new conspiracy against Napoleon's life was discovered, and this time it was the men of the highest ranks of the old aristocracy who were implicated in it. George Cadoudal, the unwearied conspirator, had, while in England, planned with the leaders of the monarchical party residing in France, or who were away from it, a new conspiracy, whose object was to destroy Bonaparte and to re-establish the monarchy.

But Fate was again on the side of the hero of Arcola. His good star still protected him. The conspiracy was discovered, and all those concerned in it were arrested. Among them were the Generals Pichegru and Moreau, the Counts de Polignac, Rivière, Saint Coster, Charles d'Hozier, and many others of the leading and most distinguished royalists. They were now under the avenging sword of justice, and the tribunal had condemned twenty of the accused to death, among whom were the above named. The emperor alone had the power to save them and to extend mercy. But he was this time determined to exhibit a merciless severity, so as to put an end to the royalists, and to prove to them that he was the ruler of France, and that the people without a murmur had given him the power to punish, as guilty of high-treason, those who dared touch their emperor.

Josephine's heart, however, remained true to her memories and her piety; and, according to her judgment, those who, with so much heroic loyalty, remained true to the ex-

iled monarchy, were criminals only as they had imperilled her husband's life, but criminals who, since their plans were destroyed, deserved pardon, because they had sinned through devotion to sacred principles.

Josephine, therefore, opposed Bonaparte's anger, and begged for pardon for the son of the former friend of Queen Marie Antoinette, the Count Jules de Polignac. Bonaparte, however, remained inexorable; he repelled Josephine with vehemence, reproaching her for asking for the life of those who threatened his. But she would not be deterred; since Bonaparte had turned her away with her petitions and prayers, she wanted at least to give to the wife of the Count de Polignac an opportunity to ask pardon for her condemned husband. Despite Bonaparte's wrath, Josephine led the Countess de Polignac into a corridor through which the emperor had to pass, when he went from the council-room into his cabinet, and by this means the countess was fortunate enough, by her tears and prayers, to save her husband's life. The Count de Polignac was pardoned; and now that Bonaparte's heart had once been opened to mercy, he also granted to Josephine the lives of Count Rivière and of General Lajolais, in behalf of whom Hortense had appealed to the emperor. More than twenty of the conspirators were accused and sentenced, some to death and some to severe punishment, but one-half of the accused were, thanks to the prayers of Josephine and of her daughter, pardoned; a few were put to death, and the rest transported. Pichegru committed suicide in prison; Moreau received permission to emigrate to America; George Cadoudal perished on the scaffold.

After this last fruitless attempt to re-establish in France the throne of the Bourbons, the royalists, wearied and terrified, had at least for a time to withdraw into obscurity and solitude, and the newly-established empire appeared in still more striking magnificence. The monarchy by God's grace

had been conquered by the empire by the people's grace, and Napoleon wanted now to show himself to astonished Europe in all the glory of his new dignity. He therefore undertook a journey with his wife through the conquered German provinces; he went to Aix-la-Chapelle, to the city of coronation of the ancient German emperors, and which now belonged to imperial France; he went to Mayence, the golden Mayence of the old Roman days, and which now, after so many streams of bloodshed, had been transferred to France.

This journey of the emperor and empress was one uninterrupted triumphal procession; the population of the old German city applauded, in dishonorable faithlessness, the new foreign ruler; all the clergy received their imperial majesties at the door of the cathedral, where Germany's first emperor, Charlemagne, was buried; and, to flatter the Empress Josephine, the clergy caused a miracle to be performed by her hand. There existed in the sacred treasury of the cathedral a casket of gold, containing the most precious relics, but which was never opened to the eyes of mortals, and whose lock no key fitted. Only once a year was this precious, sacred casket of relics shown to the worshipping crowd, and then locked up in the holy shrine. But for Josephine this treasury was condescendingly opened, and to the empress was presented this casket of relics, and behold, the miracle took place! At the touch of the empress the lid of the casket sprang up, and in it were seen the most precious jewels of royalty, amongst which was the seal-ring of Charlemagne.* No one was more surprised at this miracle than the clergy!

The neighboring German princes came to ancient Mayence to do homage to Josephine, and to win the favor of the sovereign of France toward their little principalities,

* Constant, "Mémoires," vol. iii.

and to assure him of their devotedness. Bonaparte already understood how to receive the humble, flattering German princes with the mien of a gracious protector, and to look upon them with the eye of an emperor, to whom not only the nations but also the princes must bow; and Josephine also excited the admiration of genuine princes and legitimate princesses, by the graciousness and grandeur, by the unaffected dignity and ease with which she knew how to represent the sovereign and the empress.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE POPE IN PARIS.

FATE had reserved another triumph for the ruler of France, the Emperor Napoleon—the triumph that the empire by the people's grace should be converted and exalted into the empire by God's grace. Pope Pius VII., full of thankfulness that Napoleon had re-established the Church in France, and restored to the clergy their rights, had consented to come to Paris for the sake of giving to the empire, created by the will of the French people, the benediction of the Church, and in solemn coronation to place the imperial crown on the head anointed by the hands of God's vicegerent.

Bonaparte received this news with the lofty composure of an emperor who finds it quite natural that the whole world should bow to his wishes, and Josephine received it with the modesty and joyous humility of a pious Christian. She desired above all things the blessing of God and of the Church to rest upon this crown, whose possession had seemed to her until now a spoliation, a sacrilege, and about which her conscience so often reproached her. But when God's

vicegerent, when the Holy Father of Christendom should himself have blessed her husband's crown, and should have made fast on Josephine's brow the imperial diadem, then all blame was removed, then the empress could hope that Heaven's blessing would accompany the new emperor and his wife!

But was it really Napoleon's wish that Josephine should take part in this grand ceremony of coronation? Did he wish that, like him, she should receive from the hands of the pope the consecrated crown?

Such was the deep, important question which occupied, at the approaching arrival of the pope, the young imperial court; a question, too, which occupied Josephine's mind, and also the whole family, and more especially the sisters of Bonaparte.

Josephine naturally desired that it should be so, for this solemn coronation would be a new bond uniting her to her husband, a new guaranty against the evil which the empress's foreboding spirit still dreaded. But for the very same reasons her enemies prepared their weapons to prevent Josephine from obtaining this new consecration and this new glory, and harsh and bitter conflicts took place within the inner circles of the imperial family on account of it, which on both sides were carried on with the deepest animosity and obstinacy, but finally to a complete triumph for Josephine.

Thiers, in his "History of the Consulate and of the Empire," relates the last scenes in this family quarrel:

"Napoleon vacillated between his affection for his wife and the secret presentiments of his policy, when an occurrence took place which nearly caused the sudden ruin of the unfortunate Josephine. Every one was in a state of agitation about the new monarch—brothers, sisters, and allies! In the solemnity which seemed to give to each a blessing, all desired to perform parts adequate to their actual pretensions,