

sacrifice the sweetest affections of my heart, to consider only the good of my subjects and desire a dissolution of our marriage. Arrived at the age of forty years, I may indulge a reasonable hope of living long enough to rear, in the spirit of my own thoughts and disposition, the children with which it may please Providence to bless me. God knows what such a determination has cost my heart! but there is no sacrifice which is above my courage when it is proved to be for the best interests of France. Far from having any cause of complaint, I have nothing to say but in praise of the attachment and tenderness of my beloved wife. She has embellished fifteen years of my life—the remembrance of them will be forever engraven on my heart; she was crowned by my hand: she shall retain always that rank and the title of empress; but, above all, let her never doubt my feelings, or regard me but as her best and dearest friend.”

The sweet but faltering tones of Josephine’s voice struck a chord of sympathy in every heart, as she thus, with great dignity, replied—“I respond to all the sentiments of the emperor, in consenting to the dissolution of a marriage, which henceforth is an obstacle to the happiness of France, by depriving it of the blessing of being one day governed by the descendants of that great man, evidently raised up by Providence to efface the evils of a terrible revolution, and restore the altar, the throne, and social order. But his marriage will in no respect change the sentiments of my heart; the emperor will ever find in me his truest friend. I know what this act, commanded by policy and exalted interests, has cost his heart; but we both glory in the sacrifices which we make to the good of the country. I feel elevated in giving the greatest proof of attachment and devotion that was ever given upon earth.” When

she had finished, the empress was assisted out of the apartment, but the exercises of the day, from which she was drinking such draughts of bitterness, were not yet brought to a close. Again had the imperial family and chief nobles of the realm assembled, all in grand costume, to witness the final consummation. A decree of the Senate had been obtained, proclaiming the divorce, and all that was now necessary, was that it receive the signatures and seals of the parties to be separated. Napoleon wore a hat whose sweeping plumes mostly concealed his face, but an observer could still read in his countenance traces of deep emotion. He stood with his arms crossed upon his breast motionless and speechless. A writing apparatus of gold lay upon a small table in the midst of the apartment, and before it an armchair was placed, waiting the entrance of the empress. The door opened and Josephine, leaning on the arm of Hortense, came slowly forward. For a moment she gave an involuntary shudder, and paused while her lustrous eye ran over the face of every one present, as though she had now for the first time gained a full apprehension of her doom.

It was, however, but for a moment, and proceeding forward she seated herself in the chair at the table, and listened to the decree of the council which completed the separation between herself and the object of her warmest affections. The decree was as follows:

“Art. I. The marriage contracted between the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress Josephine, is dissolved.

“Art. II. The Empress Josephine shall preserve the title and rank of EMPRESS QUEEN CROWNED.

“Art. III. Her allowance is fixed at an annual payment out of the public treasury.

“Art. IV. Whatever provision the emperor shall make in favor of the Empress Josephine out of the funds belonging to the civil list, shall be obligatory upon his successors.

“Art. V. The present Senatus-consultum shall be transmitted by a message to her imperial and royal majesty.”

Josephine listened to this decree, but the warm tears fell like rain from her quivering lids. Rising from her chair, she pronounced the oath of acceptance with a tremulous voice, and then overcome with emotion, sank again into her seat. Count Regnaud de St. Jean d'Angely placed the pen in her hand, with which she signed the fatal decree. The deed was done, but oh! with what a heaving heart did that martyr lay down the pen, and look up to catch one glance of love from the stern countenance, which, pale and motionless as that of a statue, was turned full upon her. With one convulsive sob she rose, and leaning again upon the arm of Hortense, left the apartment no longer the wife of Bonaparte.

Eugene, who had been an agonized spectator of the whole scene, followed her closely, but his emotions were too strong for his sensitive nature to endure. He had hardly left the saloon before he fainted and fell, completely overcome by his anguish.

Josephine shut herself up in her apartment, where the sorrow of her soul could be unseen by human eye. She had nerved herself for the issue, had for days been steeling her heart to composure, but when the blow fell, she bowed like a reed before the tempest. It was in vain that she assumed tranquillity: the tide of feeling swept its barriers. At night she sought a last interview with Napoleon. He had retired to rest when, with eyes swollen and red from weeping, Josephine entered

the apartment. She threw open the door but stopped, as she saw the emperor, doubtful whether to advance or retire. A throng of emotions—delicacy, love—the consciousness that she had no longer any right there, and an unwillingness to leave without an adieu, struggled in her breast. Napoleon, dismissing his servant in waiting, rose and clasped the Empress in his arms, and for a few moments they were locked in each other's embrace, silently mingling their tears together. Josephine remained with him an hour, and then parted from the man who had won and broken her heart. Her sobs told what a weight of sorrow still rested upon her spirit as she left the apartment, but the bitterness of death had passed.

And another trial was in store for her. The next morning she was to leave the Tuilleries, and bid adieu to scenes sacred to the memory of happiest years. At eleven o'clock an officer of the guard entered her room, and told her that he had orders to conduct her to Malmaison. Silently she prepared to obey the summons, but paused to weep again, when she thought of what she had sacrificed and what she was to leave. To add to her sadness, the whole household, who were tenderly attached to her, assembled together on the stairs and in the vestibule through which she was to pass, anxious to catch one last look at their martyr mistress, “who carried with her into exile the hearts of all that had enjoyed the happiness of access to her presence.” The expressions of their grief as they met her ears, were too much for the heart of Josephine. She would have stopped and taken them each by the hand, but she knew if she had hesitated now, a delirium of grief would lay her a helpless victim at their feet. She leaned upon one of her ladies, and moved on with mournful step, more tremulously and wearily

than the unfortunate, but faithful Beauharnais, had trod the floor of the guillotine. A carriage stood at the gates, an officer assisted her up the steps, and pausing to take a farewell gaze at the scenes of past greatness and departed happiness, she veiled a face whose twofold expression of resignation and sorrow made it indescribably touching and lovely; and was borne away forever from the palace consecrated by her presence, to the empire of virtue and affection.

Josephine returned to Malmaison, the mansion which twelve years before she entered as the bride of Napoleon, and where she had passed the happiest hours of life, now heart-broken and desolate. She struggled vainly to calm the agitation of her unoffending spirit, that forced the tears like rain from her swollen eyes, and to hide the agony written in unmistakable lines upon her meek and mournful face. Though past middle age, she was still youthful in appearance, and seemed the very angel of sorrow, smiling through the grief and gloom of her great calamity; the more distressed, because others were sad on her account. Every object that she looked upon reminded her of the varied past, her present humiliation, and a joyless future. Her favorite walks were no more taken for refreshment or pleasure, but became the hours of weeping, while every apartment of that villa, chosen and embellished by her taste, presented to her eye some trace of the man whose ambition crushed her, or gave back to her imagination an echo of his familiar voice. It was not simply that her divorce was unjust, and her pride wounded by so rudely taking from her brow a crown she had not sought, but her affections were torn from their object and bleeding—she was spurned from a heart that had won her own, and loved deeply in turn—and all to gratify an insatiate thirst

for power and permanent fame. None but those who have striven to conceal the throes of anguish which almost brought tears of blood, can sympathize with this uncomplaining sufferer during the months that succeeded her separation from Napoleon.