

lips and to his heart, and tears of sacred emotion started into his eyes.

Instantly the general stepped to his side, and his slender white hand, which knew so well how to wield the sword, and yet was as soft, as delicate, and as transparent as the hand of a duchess, rested lightly on Eugene's shoulder.

"My young friend," said he, in that gentle tone which won all hearts to him, "I should be very happy could I do anything for you or your family."

Eugene gazed at him with an expression of childish amazement. "Good general!" he managed to say; "then mamma and my sister will pray for you."

This ingenuousness made the general smile; and, with a friendly nod, he desired Eugene to offer his respects to his mother, and to call upon him soon again.

This meeting of Eugene and General Bonaparte was the commencement of the acquaintanceship between Bonaparte and Josephine. The sword of the guillotined General Beauharnais placed an imperial crown upon the head of his widow, and adorned the brows of his son and his daughter with royal diadems.

CHAPTER V.

THE MARRIAGE.

A FEW days after this interview between Bonaparte and Eugene, Josephine met Bonaparte at one of the brilliant *soirées* given by Barras, the first general-in-chief. She asked Barras to introduce her to the young general, and then, in her usual frank manner, utterly the opposite of all prudery, yet none the less delicate and decorous, extending her hand to Bonaparte, she thanked him, with the tender warmth of a mother, for the friendliness and kindness he had manifested to her son.

The general looked with wondering admiration at this young and beautiful woman, who claimed to be the mother of a lad grown up to manhood. Her enchanting face beamed with youth and beauty, and a sea of warmth and passion streamed from her large, dark eyes, while the gentle, love-enticing smile that played around her mouth revealed the tender feminine gentleness and amiability of her disposition. Bonaparte had never mastered the art of flattering women in the light, frivolous style of the fashionable coxcomb; and when he attempted it his compliments were frequently of so unusual and startling a character that they might just as well contain an affront as a tribute of eulogy.

"Ah! ah! How striking that looks!" he once said, while he was emperor, to the charming Duchess de Chevreuse. "What remarkable red hair you have!"

"Possibly so, sire," she replied, "but this is the first time that a man ever told me so."

And the duchess was right; for her hair was not red, but of a very handsome blond.*

To another lady, whose round, white arms pleased him, he once said: "Ah, good Heavens, what red arms you have!" Then, again, to another: "What beautiful hair you have; but what an ugly head-dress that is! Who could have put it up for you in such ridiculous style?"

Bonaparte, as I have said, did not know how to compliment women with words; but Josephine well understood the flattering language that his eyes addressed to her. She knew that she had, in that very hour, conquered the bold young lion, and she felt proud and happy at the thought; for the unusually imposing appearance of the young hero had awakened her own heart, which she had thought was dead, to livelier palpitations.

From that time forth they saw each other more frequently, and, ere long, Josephine heard from Bonaparte's own lips the glowing confession of his love. She reciprocated it, and promised him her hand. In vain her powerful friends, Tallien and Barras, endeavored to dissuade her from marrying this young, penniless general; in vain did they remind her that he might be killed in the very next battle, and that she might thus again be

* The Duchess de Chevreuse was shortly afterward banished to Tours, because she refused to serve as a lady of honor to the Queen of Spain.

left a reduced widow. Josephine shook her handsome curls, with a peculiar smile. Perhaps she was thinking of the prophecy of the negress at Martinique; perhaps she had read in the fiery glances of Bonaparte's eye, and on his broad, thoughtful brow, that he might be the very man to bring that prophecy to its consummation; perhaps she loved him ardently enough to prefer an humble lot, when shared with him, to any richer or more brilliant alliance. The representations of her friends did not frighten her away, and she remained firm in her determination to become the wife of the young general, poor as he was. Their wedding-day was fixed, and both hastened with joyous impatience to make their modest little preparations for their new housekeeping establishment. Yet Bonaparte had not been able to complete his dream of happiness; he possessed neither house nor carriage, and Josephine, too, was without an equipage.

Thus both of them often had to content themselves with going on foot through the streets, and it may be that, in this halcyon period of their felicity, they regarded the circumstance rather as a favor than as a scurvy trick of Fortune. Their tender and confidential communications were not disturbed by the loud rattle of the wheels, and they were not obliged to interrupt their sweet interchange of sentiment while getting into and out of a vehicle. Arm-in-arm, they strolled together along the promenades, he smiling proudly when the passers-by broke out in spontaneous exclamations of delight at Josephine's beauty, and she happy and exultant

as she overheard the whispered admiration and respect with which the multitude everywhere greeted Bonaparte, as she pressed with the general through the throng.

One day, Bonaparte accompanied the viscountess on a visit to Ragideau, the smallest man but the greatest lawyer in Paris. He had been the business attorney of the Beauharnais family for a long time, and Josephine now wished to withdraw from his hands, for her own disposal, a sum of money belonging to her that had been deposited with him. Bonaparte remained in the ante-room while Josephine went into the adjoining apartment, which was Ragideau's office.

"I have come to tell you that I am going to marry again," said Josephine, with her winning smile, to Ragideau.

The little attorney gave a friendly nod, as he replied: "You do well, and I congratulate you with all my heart, viscountess, for I am satisfied that you have made no other than a worthy choice."

"Undoubtedly, a very worthy choice," exclaimed Josephine, with the proud and happy look of a person really in love. "My future husband is General Bonaparte!"

The little great man (of a lawyer) fairly started with alarm. "How?" said he, "You!—the Viscountess Beauharnais, you—marry this little General Bonaparte, this general of the republic, which has already deposed him once, and may depose him again to-morrow, and throw him back into insignificance?"

Josephine's only reply was this: "I love him."

"Yes, you love him, now," exclaimed Ragideau, warmly. "But you are wrong in marrying him, and you will, one day, rue it. You are committing a folly, viscountess, for you want to marry a man who has nothing but his hat and his sword."

"But who also has a future," said Josephine, gayly, and then, turning the conversation, she began to speak of the practical matters that had brought her thither.

When her business with the notary had been concluded, Josephine returned to the anteroom where Bonaparte was waiting for her. He came, smiling, to meet her, but, at the same moment, he gave the notary, who was with her, so fierce and wrathful a glance that the latter shrank back in consternation. Josephine also remarked that Bonaparte's countenance was paler that day than usual, and that he was less communicative and less disposed to chat with her; but she had already learned that it was not advisable to question him as to the cause of his different moods. So, she kept silent on that score, and her cheerfulness and amiability soon drove away the clouds that had obscured the general's brow.

The nuptials of Bonaparte and Josephine followed, on the 9th of March, 1796, and the witnesses, besides Eugene and Hortense, Josephine's children, were Barras, Jean Lemarois, Tallien, Calmelet, and Leclerq. The marriage-contract contained, along with the absolutely requisite facts of the case, a very pleasant piece of flat-

tery for Josephine, since, in order to establish an equality of ages between the two parties, Bonaparte had himself put down a year older, and Josephine four years younger, than they really were. Bonaparte was not, as the contract states, born on the 5th of February, 1768, but on the 15th of August, 1769; and Josephine not, as the document represents, on the 23d of July, 1767, but on the 23d of June, 1763.*

Josephine acknowledged this gallant act of her young spouse in queenly fashion, for she brought him, as her wedding-gift, his appointment to the command of the Italian army, which Barras and Tallien had granted to her, at her own request.

But, before the young bridegroom repaired to his new scene of activity, there to win fresh laurels and renown, he passed a few happy weeks with his lovely wife and his new family, in the small residence in the Rue Chauteraine, which he had purchased a short time before his marriage, and which Josephine had fitted up with that elevated and refined good taste that had always distinguished her.

One-half of Bonaparte's darling wish was at length fulfilled. He had his house, which was large enough to receive his friends. There was now only a carriage to be procured in order to make the general the "happiest of men."

But, as the wishes of men always aspire still farther the farther they advance, Bonaparte was no longer con-

* Bourrienne, vol. i, p. 350.

tent with the possession of a small house in Paris. He now wanted an establishment in the country also.

"Look me up a little place in your beautiful valley of the Yonne," he wrote about this time to Bourrienne, who was then living on his property near Sens; "and as soon as I get the money, I will buy it. Then I will retire to it. Now, don't forget that I do not want any of the national domains."*

As for the carriage, the peace of Campo Formio brought the victorious General Bonaparte a magnificent team of six gray horses, which was a present to the general of the French Republic from the Emperor of Austria, who did not dream that, scarcely ten years later, he would have him for a son-in-law.

These superb grays, however, were—excepting the laurels of Arcola, Marengo, and Mantua, the only spoils of war that Bonaparte brought back with him from his famous Italian campaign—the only gift which the general had not refused to accept.

It is true that the six grays could not be very conveniently hitched to a simple private carriage, but they had an imposing look attached to the gilded coach of state in which, a year later, the first consul made his solemn entry into the Tuileries.

* Bourrienne, vol. i, p. 103.