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Josephine to her children.

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Who will arrest the torrent? O God! unless thy powerful hand control and restrain it, we are undone.

“For my part, my children, I am about to die, as your father died, a victim of the fury he always opposed, but to which he fell a sacrifice. I leave life without hatred of France and its assassins, whom I despise. But I am penetrated with sorrow for the misfortunes of my country. Honor my memory in sharing my sentiments. I leave for your inheritance the glory of your father and the name of your mother, whom some who have been unfortunate will bear in remembrance.”

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Release of Josephine.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE MARRIAGE OF JOSEPHINE AND GENERAL BONAPARTE.

THE day before Josephine was to be led to her execution there was a new revolution in Paris. Robespierre and the party then in power were overthrown. From condemning others, they were condemned themselves. They had sent hundreds, in the cart of the executioner, to the guillotine. Now it was their turn to take that fatal ride, to ascend the steps of the scaffold, and to have their own heads severed by the keen edge of the knife. Those whom they had imprisoned were set at liberty.

As Josephine emerged from the gloom of her prison into the streets of Paris, she found herself a widow, homeless, almost friendless, and in the extreme of penury. But for her children, life would have been a burden from which she would have been glad to be relieved by the executioner's axe. The storms of revolution had dispersed all her friends, and ter-

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 Apprenticeship of Eugene and Hortense.
 

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ror reigned in Paris. Her children were living upon the charity of others. It was necessary to conceal their birth as the children of a noble, for the brutal threat of Marat ever rang in her ears, "We must exterminate all the whelps of aristocracy."

Hoping to conceal the illustrious lineage of Eugene and Hortense, and probably also impelled by the necessities of poverty, Josephine apprenticed her son to a house carpenter, and her daughter was placed, with other girls of more lowly birth, in the shop of a milliner. But Josephine's beauty of person, grace of manners, and culture of mind could not leave her long in obscurity. Every one who met her was charmed with her unaffected loveliness. New friends were created, among them some who were in power. Through their interposition, a portion of her husband's confiscated estates was restored to her. She was thus provided with means of a frugal support for herself and her children. Engaging humble apartments, she devoted herself entirely to their education. Both of the children were richly endowed; inheriting from their mother and their father talents, personal loveliness, and an instinctive power of attraction. Thus

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 Napoleon Bonaparte.
 

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there came a brief lull in those dreadful storms of life by which Josephine had been so long buffeted.

But suddenly, like the transformations of the kaleidoscope, there came another and a marvellous change. All are familiar with the circumstances of her marriage to the young and rising general, Napoleon Bonaparte. This remarkable young man, enjoying the renown of having captured Toulon, and of having quelled a very formidable insurrection in the streets of Paris, was ordered by the then existing Government to disarm the whole Parisian population, that there might be no further attempt at insurrection. The officers who were sent, in performance of this duty, from house to house, took from Josephine the sword of her husband, which she had preserved as a sacred relic. The next day Eugene repaired to the headquarters of General Bonaparte to implore that the sword of his father might be restored to him. The young general was so much impressed with the grace and beauty of the boy, and with his artless and touching eloquence, that he made many inquiries respecting his parentage, treated him with marked tenderness, and promptly restored the sword. Jo-

sephine was so grateful for the kindness of General Bonaparte to Eugene, that the next day she drove to his quarters to express a mother's thanks. General Bonaparte was even more deeply impressed with the grace and loveliness of the mother than he had been with the child. He sought her acquaintance; this led to intimacy, to love, and to the proffer of marriage.

In the following letter to a friend Josephine expressed her views in reference to her marriage with General Bonaparte:

"I am urged, my dear, to marry again by the advice of all my friends, and I may almost say, by the commands of my aunt and the prayers of my children. Why are you not here to help me by your advice, and to tell me whether I ought or not to consent to a union which certainly seems calculated to relieve me from the discomforts of my present situation? Your friendship would render you clear-sighted to my interests, and a word from you would suffice to bring me to a decision.

"Among my visitors you have seen General Bonaparte. He is the man who wishes to become a father to the orphans of Alexander de Beauharnais, and husband to his widow.

"Do you love him?" is naturally your first question. My answer is perhaps 'no.' 'Do you dislike him?' 'No,' again. But the sentiments I entertain towards him are of that lukewarm kind which true devotees think worst of all, in matters of religion. Now love being a sort of religion, my feelings ought to be very different from what they really are. This is the point on which I want your advice, which would fix the wavering of my irresolute disposition. To come to a decision has always been too much for my Creole inertness, and I find it easier to obey the wishes of others.

"I admire the general's courage, the extent of his information on every subject on which he converses; his shrewd intelligence, which enables him to understand the thoughts of others before they are expressed. But I confess that I am somewhat fearful of that control which he seems anxious to exercise over all about him. There is something in his scrutinizing glance that can not be described. It awes even our Directors. Therefore it may well be supposed to intimidate a woman. He talks of his passion for me with a degree of earnestness which renders it impossible to doubt his sincerity. Yet this very circum-

Josephine to her aunt.

stance, which you would suppose likely to please me, is precisely that which has withheld me from giving the consent which I have often been upon the point of uttering.

“My spring of life is past. Can I then hope to preserve for any length of time that ardor of affection which in the general amounts almost to madness? If his love should cool, as it certainly will after our marriage, will he not reproach me for having prevented him from forming a more advantageous connection? What, then, shall I say? What shall I do? I may shut myself up and weep. Fine consolation truly, methinks I hear you say. But unavailing as I know it is, weeping is, I assure you, my only consolation whenever my poor heart receives a wound. Write to me quickly, and pray scold me if you think me wrong. You know every thing is welcome that comes from you.

“Barras\* assures me that if I marry the general, he will get him appointed commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy. This favor, though not yet granted, occasions some murmuring among Bonaparte’s brother-officers. When

\* Barras, a leading member of the Directory, and a strong friend of General Bonaparte.

Josephine to her aunt.

speaking to me on the subject yesterday, General Bonaparte said:

“‘Do they think that I can not get forward without their patronage? One day or other they will all be too happy if I grant them mine. I have a good sword by my side, which will carry me on.’

“What do you think of this self-confidence? Does it not savor of excessive vanity? A general of brigade to talk of patronizing the chiefs of Government? It is very ridiculous. Yet I know not how it happens, his ambitious spirit sometimes wins upon me so far that I am almost tempted to believe in the practicability of any project he takes into his head; and who can foresee what he may attempt?

“Madame Tallien desires me to present her love to you. She is still fair and good as ever. She employs her immense influence only for the benefit of the unfortunate. And when she performs a favor, she appears as pleased and satisfied as though she herself were the obliged party. Her friendship for me is most affectionate and sincere. And of my regard for her I need only say that it is equal to that which I entertain for you.

“Hortense grows more and more interesting

## Marriage of Josephine.

every day. Her pretty figure is fully developed, and, if I were so inclined, I should have ample reason to rail at Time, who confers charms on the daughter at the expense of the mother. But truly I have other things to think of. I try to banish gloomy thoughts, and look forward to a more propitious future, for we shall soon meet, never to part again.

“But for this marriage, which harasses and unsettles me, I could be cheerful in spite of every thing. Were it once over, happen what might, I could resign myself to my fate. I am inured to suffering, and, if I be destined to taste fresh sorrow, I can support it, provided my children, my aunt, and you remain to comfort me.

“You know we have agreed to dispense with all formal terminations to our letters. So adieu, my friend,

“JOSEPHINE.”

In March, 1796, Josephine became the bride of Napoleon Bonaparte, then the most promising young general in France, and destined to become, in achievements and renown, the foremost man in all the world. Eugene was immediately taken into the service of his stepfather.

## Letter to Eugene.

In the following letter to Eugene we have a pleasing revelation of the character of Hortense at that time, and of the affectionate relations existing between the mother and her children:

“I learn with pleasure, my dear Eugene, that your conduct is worthy of the name you bear, and of the protector under whom it is so easy to learn to become a great captain. Bonaparte has written to me that you are every thing that he can wish. As he is no flatterer, my heart is proud to read your eulogy sketched by a hand which is usually far from being lavish in praise. You well know that I never doubted your capability to undertake great things, or the brilliant courage which you inherit. But you, alas! know how much I dislike your removal from me, fearing that your natural impetuosity might carry you too far, and that it might prevent you from submitting to the numerous petty details of discipline which must be very disagreeable when the rank is only subaltern.

“Judge, then, of my joy on learning that you remember my advice, and that you are as obedient to your superiors in command as you are kind and humane to those beneath you.

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Letter to Eugene.

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This conduct, my child, makes me quite happy, and these words, I know, will reward you more than all the favors you can receive. Read them often, and repeat to yourself that your mother, though far from you, complains not of her lot, since she knows that yours will be brilliant, and will deserve so to be.

“Your sister shares all my feelings, and will tell you so herself. But that of which I am sure she will not speak, and which is therefore my duty to tell, is her attention to me and her aunt. Love her, my son, for to me she brings consolation, and she overflows with affection for you. She prosecutes her studies with uncommon success, but music, I think, will be the art she will carry to the highest perfection. With her sweet voice, which is now well cultivated, she sings romances in a manner that would surprise you. I have just bought her a new piano from the best maker, Erard, which redoubles her passion for that charming art which you prefer to every other. That perhaps accounts for your sister applying to it with so much assiduity.

“Were you here, you would be telling me a thousand times a day to beware of the men who pay particular attention to Hortense.

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Rising greatness of Napoleon.

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Some there are who do so whom you do not like, and whom you seem to fear she may prefer. Set your mind at rest. She is a bit of a coquette, is pleased with her success, and torments her victims, but her heart is free. I am the confidante of all her thoughts and feelings, which have hitherto been just what they ought to be. She now knows that when she thinks of marrying, it is not my consent alone she has to seek, and that my will is subordinate to that of the man to whom we owe every thing. The knowledge of this fact must prevent her from fixing her choice in a way that may not meet the approval of Bonaparte, and the latter will not give your sister in marriage to any one to whom you can object.”

There was now an end to poverty and obscurity. The rise of Napoleon was so brilliant and rapid that Josephine was speedily placed at the head of society in Paris, and vast crowds were eager to do her homage. Never before did man move with strides so rapid. The lapse of a few months transformed her from almost a homeless, friendless, impoverished widow, to be the bride of one whose advancing greatness seemed to outvie the wildest creations of fiction. The unsurpassed splendor of Napo-

## Expedition to Egypt.

leon's achievements crowded the saloons of Josephine with statesmen, philosophers, generals, and all who ever hasten to the shrine of rising greatness.

After the campaign of Italy, which gave Napoleon not only a French but a European reputation for military genius and diplomatic skill, he took command of the Army of Egypt. Josephine accompanied him to Toulon. Standing upon a balcony, she with tearful eyes watched the receding fleet which bore her husband to that far-distant land, until it disappeared beneath the horizon of the blue Mediterranean. Eugene accompanied his father. Hortense remained with her mother, who took up her residence most of the time during her husband's absence at Plombières, a celebrated watering-place.

Josephine, anxious in every possible way to promote the popularity of her absent husband, and thus to secure his advancement, received with cordiality all who came to her with their congratulations. She was endowed with marvellous power of pleasing. Every one who saw her was charmed with her. Hortense was bewitchingly beautiful and attractive.

Josephine had ample means to indulge her

## Letter to Bonaparte.

taste in entertainments, and was qualified eminently to shine in such scenes. The consequence was that her saloons were the constant resort of rank and wealth and fashion. Some enemy wrote to Napoleon, and roused his jealousy to a very high degree, by representing Josephine as forgetting her husband, immersed in pleasure, and coquetting with all the world.

Napoleon was exceedingly disturbed, and wrote Josephine a very severe letter. The following extract from her reply fully explains the nature of this momentary estrangement:

"Is it possible, general, that the letter I have just received comes from you? I can scarcely credit it when I compare that letter with others to which your love imparts so many charms. My eyes, indeed, would persuade me that your hands traced these lines, but my heart refuses to believe that a letter from you could ever have caused the mortal anguish I experience on perusing these expressions of your displeasure, which afflict me the more when I consider how much pain they must have caused you.

"I know not what I have done to provoke some malignant enemy to destroy my peace by disturbing yours. But certainly a powerful motive must influence some one in continu-

ally renewing calumnies against me, and giving them a sufficient appearance of probability to impose on the man who has hitherto judged me worthy of his affection and confidence. These two sentiments are necessary to my happiness. And if they are to be so soon withdrawn from me, I can only regret that I was ever blest in possessing them or knowing you.

"On my first acquaintance with you, the affliction with which I was overwhelmed led me to believe that my heart must ever remain a stranger to any sentiment resembling love. The sanguinary scenes of which I had been a witness and a victim constantly haunted my thoughts. I therefore apprehended no danger to myself from the frequent enjoyment of your society. Still less did I imagine that I could for a single moment fix your choice.

"I, like every one else, admired your talents and acquirements. And better than any one else I foresaw your future glory. But still I loved you only for the services you rendered to my country. Why did you seek to convert admiration into a more tender sentiment, by availing yourself of all those powers of pleasing with which you are so eminently gifted, since, so shortly after having united your des-

tiny with mine, you regret the felicity you have conferred upon me?

"Do you think I can ever forget the love with which you once cherished me? Can I ever become indifferent to the man who has blest me with the most enthusiastic and ardent passion? Can I ever efface from my memory your paternal affection for Hortense, the advice and example you have given Eugene? If all this appears impossible, how can you, for a moment, suspect me of bestowing a thought upon any but yourself?

"Instead of listening to traducers, who, for reasons which I can not explain, seek to disturb our happiness, why do you not silence them by enumerating the benefits you have bestowed on a woman whose heart could never be reached with ingratitude? The knowledge of what you have done for my children would check the malignity of these calumniators; for they would then see that the strongest link of my attachment for you depends on my character as a mother. Your subsequent conduct, which has claimed the admiration of all Europe, could have no other effect than to make me adore the husband who gave me his hand when I was poor and unfortunate. Every step you