
Letter from Josephine.

ers of this nefarious attempt shall have been secured, let severity give place to pity for inferior agents, seduced, as they may have been, by dangerous falsehoods or exaggerated opinions.

“When just invested with supreme power, the First Consul, as seems to me, ought rather to gain hearts, than to be exhibited as ruling slaves. Soften by your counsels whatever may be too violent in his just resentment. Punish—alas! that you must certainly do—but pardon still more. Be also the support of those unfortunate men who, by frank avowal or repentance, shall expiate a portion of their crime.

“Having myself narrowly escaped perishing in the Revolution, you must regard as quite natural my interference on behalf of those who can be saved without involving in new danger the life of my husband, precious to me and to France. On this account do, I entreat you, make a wide distinction between the authors of the crime and those who, through weakness or fear, have consented to take part therein. As a woman, a wife, a mother, I must feel the heart-rendings of those who will apply to me. Act, citizen minister, in such a manner that the number of these may be lessened. This

Michel Duroc.

will spare me much grief. Never will I turn away from the supplications of misfortune. But in the present instance you can do infinitely more than I, and you will, on this account, excuse my importunity. Rely on my gratitude and esteem.”

There was a young officer about twenty-nine years of age, by the name of Michel Duroc, who was then a frequent visitor at the Tuileries and Malmaison. He was a great favorite of Napoleon, and was distinguished alike for beauty of person and gallantry upon the field of battle. Born of an ancient family, young Duroc, having received a thorough military education, attached himself, with enthusiastic devotion, to the fortunes of Napoleon. He attracted the attention of General Bonaparte during his first Italian campaign, where he was appointed one of his aids. Following Napoleon to Egypt, he gained renown in many battles, and was speedily promoted to the rank of chief of battalion, and then to general of brigade. At Jaffa he performed a deed of gallantry, which was rewarded by the applauding shouts of nearly the whole army. At Jean d’Acre he led one of the most bloody and obstinate assaults recorded in the military annals of France,

General Duroc at Bautzen.

where he was severely wounded by the bursting of a howitzer. At the battle of Aboukir he won great applause. Napoleon's attachment to this young officer was such, that he took him to Paris on his return to Egypt. In the eventful day of the 18th Brumaire, Duroc stood by the side of Napoleon, and rendered him eminent service. The subsequent career of this very noble young man brilliantly reflects his worth and character. Rapidly rising, he became grand marshal of the palace and Duke of Friuli.

The memorable career of General Duroc was terminated at the battle of Bautzen, in Germany, on the 23d of May, 1813. He was struck by the last ball thrown from the batteries of the enemy. The affecting scene of his death was as follows:

"In the early dawn of the morning of the 23d of May, Napoleon was on horseback directing the movements of his troops against the routed foe. He soon overtook the rear-guard of the enemy, which had strongly posted its batteries on an eminence to protect the retreat of the discomfited army. A brief but fierce conflict ensued, and one of Napoleon's aids was struck dead at his feet. Duroc was riding by

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the side of the Emperor. Napoleon turned to him and said, 'Duroc, fortune is determined to have one of us to-day.' Hour after hour the incessant battle raged, as the advance-guard of the Emperor drove before it the rear-guard of the Allies. In the afternoon, as the Emperor, with a portion of the Imperial Guard, four abreast, was passing through a ravine, enveloped in a blinding cloud of dust and smoke, a cannon-ball, glancing from a tree, killed one officer, and mortally wounded Duroc, tearing out his entrails. The tumult and obscurity were such that Napoleon did not witness the casualty. When informed of it, he seemed for a moment overwhelmed with grief, and then exclaimed, in faltering accents,

"Duroc! gracious Heaven, my presentiments never deceive me. This is a sad day, a fatal day."

Immediately alighting from his horse, he walked to and fro for a short time absorbed in painful thoughts, while the thunders of the battle resounded unheeded around him. Then turning to Caulaincourt, he said,

"Alas! when will fate relent? When will there be an end of this? My eagles will yet triumph, but the happiness which accompanies

them is fled. Whither has he been conveyed? I must see him. Poor, poor Duroc!"

The Emperor found the dying marshal in a cottage, still stretched upon the camp litter by which he had been conveyed from the field. Pallid as marble from the loss of blood, and with features distorted with agony, he was scarcely recognizable. The Emperor approached the litter, threw his arms around the neck of the friend he so tenderly loved, and exclaimed, in tones of deepest grief, "Alas! then is there no hope?"

"None whatever," the physicians replied.

The dying man took the hand of Napoleon, and gazing upon him affectionately, said, "Sire, my whole life has been devoted to your service, and now my only regret is that I can no longer be useful to you." Napoleon, in a voice almost inarticulate with emotion, said,

"Duroc, there is another life. There you will await me."

"Yes, sire," the marshal faintly replied, "but that will be thirty years hence. You will then have triumphed over your enemies, and realized the hopes of our country. I have lived an honest man. I have nothing to reproach myself with. I have a daughter, to whom your Majesty will be a father."

Napoleon was so deeply affected that he remained for some time in silence, incapable of uttering a word, but still affectionately holding the hand of his dying friend.

Duroc was the first to break the silence. "Sire," he said, "this sight pains you. Leave me."

The Emperor pressed his hand to his lips, embraced him affectionately, and saying sadly, "Adieu, my friend," hurried out of the room.

Supported by Marshal Soult and Caulaincourt, Napoleon, overwhelmed with grief, retired to his tent, which had been immediately pitched in the vicinity of the cottage. "This is horrible," he exclaimed. "My excellent, my dear Duroc! Oh, what a loss is this!"

His eyes were flooded with tears, and for the moment, forgetting every thing but his grief, he retired to the solitude of his inner tent.

The squares of the Old Guard, sympathizing in the anguish of their commander and their sovereign, silently encamped around him. Napoleon sat alone in his tent, wrapped in his gray great-coat, his forehead resting upon his hand, absorbed in painful musings. For some time none of his officers were willing to intrude upon his grief. At length two of the generals

Quotation from J. T. Headley.

ventured to consult him respecting arrangements which it seemed necessary to make for the following day. Napoleon shook his head and replied, "Ask me nothing till to-morrow," and again covering his eyes with his hand, he resumed his attitude of meditation. Night came. One by one the stars came out. The moon rose brilliantly in the cloudless sky. The soldiers moved with noiseless footsteps, and spoke in subdued tones. The rumbling of wagons and the occasional boom of a distant gun alone disturbed the stillness of the scene.

"Those brave soldiers," says J. T. Headley, "filled with grief to see their beloved chief bowed down by such sorrows, stood for a long time silent and tearful. At length, to break the mournful silence, and to express the sympathy they might not speak, the band struck up a requiem for the dying marshal. The melancholy strains arose and fell in prolonged echoes over the field, and swept in softened cadences on the ear of the fainting, dying warrior. But still Napoleon moved not. They changed the measure to a triumphant strain, and the thrilling trumpets breathed forth their most joyful notes till the heavens rang with the melody. Such bursts of music welcomed Na-

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oleon as he returned, flushed with victory, till his eye kindled with exultation. But now they fell on a dull and listless ear. It ceased, and again the mournful requiem filled all the air. But nothing could rouse him from his agonizing reflections. His friend lay dying, and the heart that he loved more than his life was throbbing its last pulsations. What a theme for a painter, and what a eulogy was that scene! That noble heart, which the enmity of the world could not shake, nor the terrors of the battle-field move from its calm repose, nor even the hatred nor the insults of his at last victorious enemies humble, here sank in the moment of victory before the tide of affection. What military chieftain ever mourned thus on the field of victory, and what soldiers ever loved their leader so!"

Before the dawn of the morning Duroc expired. When the event was announced to Napoleon, he said sadly, "All is over. He is released from his misery. Well, he is happier than I." The Emperor ordered a monument to be reared to his memory, and, when afterwards dying at St. Helena, left to the daughter of Duroc one of the largest legacies bequeathed in his will. That Duroc was worthy

Character of Duroc.

of this warm affection of the Emperor, may be inferred from the following testimony of Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza :

“ Marshal Duroc was one of those men who seem too pure and perfect for this world, and whose excellence helps to reconcile us to human nature. In the high station to which the Emperor had wisely raised him, the grand marshal retained all the qualities of the private citizen. The splendor of his position had not power to dazzle or corrupt him. Duroc remained simple, natural, and independent; a warm and generous friend, a just and honorable man. I pronounce on him this eulogy without fear of contradiction.”

It is not strange that Hortense, a beautiful girl of eighteen, should have fallen deeply in love with such a young soldier, twenty-nine years of age. It would seem that Duroc was equally inspired with love and admiration for Hortense. Though perhaps not positively engaged, there was such an understanding between the young lovers that a brisk correspondence was kept up during one of Duroc's embassies to the north.

Bourrienne, at that time the private secretary of Napoleon, says that this correspondence



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was carried on by consent through his hands. With the rapidly rising greatness of the family, there was little retirement to be enjoyed at the Tuileries or at Malmaison. The saloons of the First Consul were every evening crowded with guests. Youthful love is the same passion, and the young heart throbs with the same impulses, whether in the palace or in the cottage. When Bourrienne whispered to Hortense that he had a letter for her from Duroc, and slipped it unperceived into her hand, she would immediately retire to her room for its perusal; and the moistened eyes with which she returned to the saloon testified to the emotions with which the epistle from her lover had been read.

But Josephine had the strongest reasons which can well be imagined for opposing the connection with Duroc. She was a very loving mother. She wished to do every thing in her power to promote the happiness of Hortense, but she probably was not aware how deeply the affections of her daughter were fixed upon Duroc. Her knowledge of the world also taught her that almost every young lady and every young gentleman have several loves before reaching the one which is consummated by marriage. She had another match in view

The divorce suggested.

for Hortense which she deemed far more eligible for her, and far more promotive of the happiness of the family.

Napoleon had already attained grandeur unsurpassed by any of the ancient kings of France. Visions of still greater power were opening before him. It was not only to him a bitter disappointment but apparently it might prove a great national calamity that he had no heir to whom he could transmit the sceptre which France had placed in his hands. Upon his downfall, civil war might ravage the kingdom, as rival chieftains grasped at the crown. It was earnestly urged upon him that the interests of France imperiously demanded that, since he had no prospect of an heir by Josephine, he should obtain a divorce and marry another. It was urged that the welfare of thirty millions of people should not be sacrificed to the inclinations of two individuals.

Josephine had heard these rumors, and her life was embittered by their terrible import. A pall of gloom shrouded her sky, and anguish began to gnaw at her heart amidst all the splendors of the Tuileries and the lovely retirement of Malmaison.

Napoleon's younger brother, Louis, was of

Character of Louis Bonaparte.

nearly the same age with Hortense. He was a young man of fine personal appearance, very intelligent, of scholarly tastes, and of irreproachable character. Though pensive in temperament, he had proved himself a hero on the field of battle, and he possessed, in all respects, a very noble character. Many of the letters which he had written from Egypt to his friends in Paris had been intercepted by the British cruisers, and were published. They all bore the impress of the lofty spirit of integrity and humanity with which he was inspired. Napoleon was very fond of his brother Louis. He would surely place him in the highest positions of wealth and power. As Louis Bonaparte was remarkably domestic in his tastes and affectionate in his disposition, Josephine could not doubt that he would make Hortense happy. Apparently it was a match full of promise, brilliant, and in all respects desirable. Its crowning excellence, however, in the eye of Josephine was, that should Hortense marry Louis Bonaparte and give birth to a son, Napoleon would recognize that child as his heir. Bearing the name of Bonaparte, with the blood of the Bonapartes in his veins, and being the child of Hortense, whom he so tenderly loved

Testimony of Bourrienne.

as a daughter, the desires of Napoleon and of France might be satisfied. Thus the terrible divorce might be averted.

It is not probable that at this time Napoleon seriously thought of a divorce, though the air was filled with rumors put in circulation by those who were endeavoring to crowd him to it. He loved Josephine tenderly, and of course could not sympathize with her in those fears of which it was impossible for her to speak to him. Bourrienne testifies that Josephine one day said to him in confidence, veiling and at the same time revealing her fears, "This projected marriage with Duroc leaves me without support. Duroc, independent of Bonaparte's friendship, is nothing. He has neither fortune, rank, nor even reputation. He can afford me no protection against the enmity of the brothers. I must have some more certain reliance for the future. My husband loves Louis very much. If I can succeed in uniting my daughter to him, he will prove a strong counterpoise to the calumnies and persecutions of my brothers-in-law."

These remarks were repeated to Napoleon. According to Bourrienne, he replied,

"Josephine labors in vain. Duroc and Hor-

Disappointed lovers.

tense love each other, and they shall be married. I am attached to Duroc. He is well born. I have given Caroline to Murat, and Pauline to Le Clerc. I can as well give Hortense to Duroc. He is as good as the others. He is general of division. Besides, I have other views for Louis."

Josephine, however, soon won the assent of Napoleon to her views, and he regarded with great satisfaction the union of Hortense with Louis. The contemplated connection with Duroc was broken off. Two young hearts were thus crushed, with cruelty quite unintentional. Duroc was soon after married to an heiress, who brought him a large fortune, and, it is said, a haughty spirit and an irritable temper, which embittered all his days.

Hortense, disappointed, heart-broken, despairing, was weary of the world. She probably never saw another happy day. Such is life.

"Sorrows are for the sons of men,
And weeping for earth's daughters."