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IMMORTALS OF FRANCE



NAPOLEON AND EUGENIE

By E. A. Rheinhardt

MARIE ANTOINETTE

By Katharine Anthony

*MEMOIRS OF
HECTOR BERLIOZ*

*Translated by Rachel and Eleanor Holmes
Fully annotated, and with an Introduction,
by Ernest Newman*

EMPRESS INNOCENCE

THE LIFE OF MARIE LOUISE

By M. E. Ravage

NAPOLEON

By Werner Hegemann

A LADY WHO LOVED HERSELF

THE LIFE OF MADAME ROLAND

By Catharine Young

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ALFRED · A · KNOFF

JOSEPHINE





JOSEPHINE

Detail of a portrait by Pierre Prud'hon, in the Louvre

E. A. RHEINHARDT



JOSEPHINE

WIFE OF NAPOLEON

ENGLISH VERSION BY
CAROLINE FREDRICK



New York ALFRED · A · KNOPF *Mcmxxxiv*

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JOSEPHINE



CONTENTS

BOOK ONE: A STORMY PRELUDE

I · <i>Childhood</i>	3
II · <i>Departure</i>	14
III · <i>Vicomtesse de Beauharnais</i>	23
IV · <i>The End and the Beginning</i>	46
V · <i>Experiencing Freedom</i>	61

*BOOK TWO: THE CHANGING OF
A WORLD*

I · <i>A Variety of Events</i>	75
II · <i>Beginning to Learn Anew</i>	80
III · <i>The Agonizing End of Comfort</i>	89
IV · <i>Terror</i>	103
V · <i>Luxury and Starvation</i>	124
VI · <i>“Arrangements”</i>	144
VII · <i>“Ce Drôle de Bonaparte”</i>	151

VIII · <i>Common Sense</i>	162
IX · <i>Change of Name</i>	170

BOOK THREE: THE GREAT CHANCE

I · <i>Many Letters and a Reply</i>	175
II · <i>Amusement and Pathos</i>	189
III · <i>Demands for Power</i>	207
IV · <i>The Distant Bonaparte</i>	219
V · <i>Decisions</i>	233

BOOK FOUR: THE GREAT POSITION

I · <i>Change</i>	249
II · <i>The Household</i>	254
III · <i>Getting and Spending</i>	264
IV · <i>Uneasy Greatness and Apotheosis</i>	278
V · <i>The Empress</i>	293
VI · <i>Farewell</i>	311
VII · <i>Never an End</i>	339
INDEX	<i>follows page 365</i>



JOSEPHINE




ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>Josephine.</i>	<i>frontispiece</i>
Detail of a portrait by Pierre Prud'hon, in the Louvre	
<i>Alexandre de Beauharnais</i>	24
<i>The Empress Josephine.</i>	100
Painting by Guillaume Lethière, in the Museum at Versailles	
<i>Bonaparte at the Bridge of Arcola, in 1796.</i>	152
Painting by Antoine Jean Gros, in the Louvre	
<i>Bonaparte as First Consul, in 1800.</i>	258
Painting by Eugène Isabey, in the Château of Malmaison	
<i>Entrance to the Château of Malmaison</i>	270
<i>Bedroom in the Château of Malmaison</i>	270
<i>Josephine, Empress of the French, in 1814.</i>	308
Painting by François Gérard, in the Château of Malmaison	
<i>The Tomb of Josephine, in the Church at Rueil</i>	362

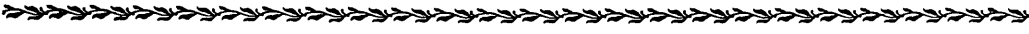
BOOK ONE

A STORMY PRELUDE





CHAPTER ONE



CHILDHOOD

Not until legend was already enclosing her life did the ageing lady at Malmaison occasionally begin to recall the years of her childhood. She did this, of course, with no serious conscious search after the actual occurrences of those early days. They were of small concern to her. Long ago she had purposely turned into fairy-tales both her own memories and those of the mulatto Marion who had witnessed all the far-distant happenings; and she herself was the first to believe her own fancies. Quite vividly and simply she called back to mind the *décor* of her childhood years — for *décor* she had always possessed much talent and taste — and then began to surround herself with the tropical plants in whose fragrance and shadow she had wandered as a little girl.

It has been granted to only a favoured few to experience life as a unity, to feel that the later years are in truth part of the ego which, “strangely silent and unfamiliar, glides out of childhood.” This ageing lady, who bent in affected melancholy above the many foreign flowers sent her at great expense over hostile seas, possessed to an amazingly small degree the sensation of being one with the manifold forms of her identity. She was always so completely absorbed in the present that the past came back to her only through a sort of mechanical memory, when some present purpose was to be

served by it as well. The fact that varying phases of her life may have fashioned her found expression in vivid form, not in actual perception. Through her interest, therefore, in the tropical plants, with no other conscious aim than to fill the leisure hours that had grown burdensome, she ultimately recalled something of her childhood. This, however, did not occur until she was living in a present which, hitherto completely right, had ceased to be so.

Certainly it was not difficult for her to change into a lost dreamland the distant tropic island of her childhood which she once had so gladly left. The poet Francis Jammes, who also was born on one of the Antilles group, tells us in a book of recollections that during his youth in France "the islands" still meant all that was adventurous, romantic, and mysterious; and that everything dangerous and different surrounded those who returned from the islands to France, where there was naturally so little geographic experience. A hundred years earlier the peril of adventure was much more real and the knowledge of those new colonies far less accurate — largely acquired, as it was, from those of first-generation birth in the islands who returned to France with fabulous riches. As their showy wealth gave desired business security, their vague information about foreign affairs was believed, all the more because most of the narrators themselves bore good old family names combining, in addition, a new exciting passion and rather visionary wildness with great confidence in their elegance and culture.

The lady at Malmaison, now fifty years old, had come to Paris when quite young; yet even then the new legend and the vogue of the Creole¹ was flourishing in society — a caprice of fashion. Josephine, however, could have had no share either then in the gaiety or earlier in the profusion of wealth. But she was a Creole, and when she later realized the exciting vision of this fact, she made

¹ By *Creole* is meant the whites born on the islands, not those of various admixtures of blood who liked to call themselves by that name, and often erroneously are so called.

herself so much a part of the Parisian Creole legend that memory willingly aided imagination. She had not been one of the rich Creole women who had introduced into Paris the airy white material from the island and the gay silk madras head-dress; nor had she participated in the last brilliant festivity of the *ancien régime*, to which the small Creole element had lent a special colourfulness; yet she really had worn madras and mousseline on the island and was in many other ways the Creole her memory had cherished.

A recent thinker treats memory as genius, memory for one's own past life presuming an identity with it, a feeling of being one with all the circumstances of the past and the conduct of that time. He considers the possession of such memory an eminently masculine characteristic. In contrast with this is the extremely feminine quality of the natural or transitory memory which one physiologist has termed organized material. However loath one may be to formulate distinctions of this kind, they nevertheless obtrude when a strange arbitrary fate brings two such extremes together, as this biography will later show.

The life of Josephine from the very beginning is shaped by this Negroid, plantlike trait of forgetting. In the service of the present she obscured the realities of the past, always in entire conformity with a desire for appearances. Hence no fact which she herself tells of her childhood is reliable. Viewing her life from its start, one is forced to be satisfied with external knowledge — unless wishing to invent from later findings. Indeed, everyone who does not find this animal dream and human awakening to life recorded by the one who experienced them must be content to assemble all external facts into one complete picture.

The family of Tascher de la Pagerie, from which Josephine was descended, is of an old, petty nobility, one of the many families of the French provinces who for centuries were the supernumeraries of

history, producing respectable officers, mediocre men of administration and judicature; at times, through good marriages, acquiring wealth, which melted away in the next generation; never reaching high rank either at court or in the few prominent positions of their days.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, during the Second Empire, the creation of Josephine's grandson, this family of Tascher de la Pagerie again attained prominence. One of the women began her memoirs of the time with a genealogy of the family. From the falsity of the memoirs and the highly dubious role which this Countess Stephanie played, all her statements are open to doubt. But since the least credulous historian of the Napoleonic era accepts them, they may be mentioned here briefly.

The family of Tascher de la Pagerie, whose origin presumably can be traced to the twelfth century, is represented as having had landed estates between Orléans and Blois in the fifteenth century. By the seventeenth century the family no longer owned the estate, luck seemingly changing from then on, as was true of many French people like them. When the mythical accounts of the wonders and riches in the Antilles began to spread through France, the eldest son of this impoverished family, after various failures at home, emigrated. Hence in 1726 Gaspard-Joseph Tascher de la Pagerie arrived in Martinique. Reports of the enormous fortunes made on the islands related to the generation of French pioneers; the fact was not denied that those first settlers — besides a determination to win their fortune — took with them a considerable amount of money to enable them to settle and to buy the necessary slaves. Tascher thought one of the first conditions of fortune-hunting was fulfilled in his possessing an old and noble name, so he took with him little more than that. Thanks to it he soon married a rather wealthy girl, but afterwards squandered the greater part of what he had thus acquired.

In studying the lesser endowed or poorer members of the most

privileged class of those times — namely, the nobility — one is impressed with the fact that not a few of them spent their lives trying to gather a crumb from the rich table of privilege. Where legal regulations were so confused and uncertain, all titles were considered right; for in reality everything depended on favour, not on justice.

The chief occupations of the average nobleman of the eighteenth century, besides amusing himself, were seeking protection, writing supplications and requests for aid, which easily became begging letters, making use of every acquaintance who rose to power, and being constantly on the watch for a benefice, a vacancy in the schools, an officer's appointment, any position, great or small. Such conditions continued to increase during the decades following the decline of the monarchy. Beyond this hope of getting close to the life-giving sun of the feudal system, or at least of being touched by its rays, there was but one desire and one dream: a good marriage.

Neither was Gaspard-Joseph Tascher, the disappointed seeker after fortune, spared the blessing seemingly bestowed only too generously on the petty nobility of France — an abundant issue. His many children made quick and constant inroads upon the money acquired through his rich wife, thus increasing the number who begged for a place at table — while the dishes on that table began to decrease. Hence when the Revolution tried to end existing conditions, not a few revolutionists were astounded at the number of nobles whose existence was made public only by the lists of the proscribed and the émigrés.

Gaspard-Joseph finally succeeded in obtaining appointments for his two sons as pages at court; this service when it ended secured for them officers' commissions. Much more difficult — indeed, almost impossible to solve — was the problem of providing a future for his three daughters, who were nearly dowerless. So far as one of the daughters was concerned this question was finally settled, and

as the solution is of significance to the story we are telling, mention of it will soon be made.

After the two sons returned to Martinique, the older one, Joseph-Gaspard, secured a lieutenant's commission in the coast artillery of the island — a kind of free corps. This was not a place of exceptional influence, nor did the pay amount to much. Just as the under-officers' commissions in the regular French army often ruined financially those who held them, so these situations in the militia demanded complete self-support of their incumbents. Young Tascher is pictured as a fine-looking, well-built man who in his years at court had learned a lot about cards, dice, and love; and under the influence of the tropics he is said to have further cultivated on his native island the knowledge he had acquired in Paris and Versailles. The same good fortune which aided the one daughter allowed this son to fulfil his father's hope for a lucky marriage, despite the promiscuous tendency which he did not hide and his meagre finances. Of this circumstance a word is now essential.

The Tascher family in some unknown way had gained the protection of no less a personage than the Governor-General of the island. How it came to pass that there sprang up a sacrificing interest for the whole family from the kindly disposition of a temporarily powerful man is an important part of the first chapters of this biography and will soon be related. The fortunate marriage of the young Lieutenant probably was arranged through the intercession of the girl's wealthy and highly respectable father. All that is known of the bride, Rose-Claire Des Vergers de Sanois, is that she had passed her first youth, and had a friendly and good-natured disposition — qualities which her marriage subsequently had need of. She was a good match only in comparison with what the bridegroom himself represented and brought with him. Except for a modest sum, her dowry consisted in the annual income from a capital that she was to inherit on her father's death — which, however, was lost during

his lifetime in a catastrophe which devastated the island. Following their wedding, which for that time was without pomp, young Tascher moved to the home of his parents-in-law, in the small township of Trois-Ilets. Before he had time to give thought to marital happiness and his own fitness for it, signals of alarm called the men capable of bearing arms to the defence of the island. For the second time in eight years the English attempted to take possession of the Antilles group, this time with such force that all effort — in which Lieutenant Tascher took part bravely to the last moment — amounted to nothing. The English occupation was of short duration, however, and the Treaty of Paris gave the islands back to France. Scarcely ten days after the French fleet resumed possession of what was again French soil, the first child, a girl, was born to the Taschers. Stress of war, anxiety, and foreign dominion had preceded the birth of this bit of humanity, and, seemingly in consequence, the feeling grew in her blood that war (unheeded by her, existing through half her life, and in the latter phases of which she died, almost under a foreign yoke) was the most natural and casual thing on earth, a condition about which there was no use arguing. The little girl, born June 23, 1763, had blue eyes like her mother and grandmother, who were of Irish extraction; their family name was Brown. To the Negro slave-women those blue eyes seemed a still greater wonder than the very white skin. The child was christened Marie-Joseph-Rose after her various grandparents. First came the nickname Yeyette, and long afterwards Josephine.

The care of this child, as well as of two girls born subsequently, was entrusted to slaves, especially to a mulatto named Marion. This was customary on the islands. But soon after the horror of war another misfortune fell upon the household of this young family. Disasters caused by the elements are not unusual on the islands; but the catastrophe of 1766, which laid waste Martinique, seems to have been one of the most frightful which ever befell the Antilles. The

Sanois estate had to bear a large share of the enormous loss. Most of the plantation was destroyed, and the house itself, which was said to have been very lovely, was completely demolished. The family sought shelter in the only building that remained standing (it formerly had been a sugar-refinery), and thereafter they continued to live there. A little later old Sanois, who had been an experienced manager, suddenly died, and to young Tascher, not yet thirty years of age, was left the entire responsibility of the disorganized household. He had never imagined his life was to be like that. The brief campaign from which he had received a modest royal pension for his bravery had created within him the feeling that he was made for something better. Instead, he must live by the side of a sorrowing wife who had not even borne him a son, for whom all this rebuilding might have been worth while! His parents-in-law had another estate, presumably less important, on the island Sainte-Lucie. He became manager there because he had contrived to be appointed captain of the dragoons of that island. This gave him a legitimate excuse for his absences from home, which were ever longer and more frequent. The objective later became, not Sainte-Lucie, but Port Royal, lying at the other end of the huge bay, where there was companionship after his own heart — nobles who like himself fed on the brief glitter of their service as pages or officers in Paris. There was much gambling and drinking. And the Negro girls felt honoured and were accommodating when one of lordly stock condescended to them. His wife and mother-in-law could carry out his instructions the best they knew how. This was Josephine's father, this the household. A biography written on the principle of "how it might have been" says: "Her father, like the rich inhabitants of the island, was a veritable sovereign on his estate. He was the type of nobleman who never appeared on the plantations he owned except with sword at his side and cane in hand. The estate resembled an absolute monarchy, but the absolutism was mellowed by kindness. For a gentleman

like Tascher de la Pagerie was more a protector than a despot," and so on.

According to Masson, the family owned scarcely more than fifteen or twenty slaves. This is far more probable than the hundreds of slaves which the legends of Josephine's childhood later describe. For though Negro slaves were indispensable in a climate where they alone could perform physical labour, a male slave at the age when he was able to work cost about twenty-six hundred gold francs, and a competent female slave cost scarcely any less. This market value may perhaps have been the best protection against too barbarous treatment by their masters. The accumulated hatred of the Negroes against their owners, despite the presumably patriarchal relations, was shown by the savage cruelties of their rebellion at the end of the century.

Although the invented accounts of Josephine's youth — written in the style of *Paul and Virginia* — are correct in scarcely any detail, there remains enough that is genuinely romantic about her childhood. Little of the distress and trouble of the adult members of the family entered her sphere of life. There was also little concern about her education. Her senses perceived the passing of the seasons through glowing plants, flower and harvest; from the ocean tides she learned the time of day. What her mother and grandmother told her about God, the creation of the world, and God's purpose toward man grew quickly, spurred on by Negro talk, into illimitably ghastly tales and the awaiting of miracles. The children, joined a few years later by a little boy named Alexandre de Beauharnais, spent all their days out of doors; they hunted for bright sea-shells, ran all over the plantation, ate coconut and mango, and sat with the slaves when rest was allowed them, through this familiarity early enjoying the sense of mastery. When their father came home and sometimes brought with him a friend, the conversation was always about Paris and the court; and in Tascher's tales of longing there

was an undercurrent of bitterness, as if his wife had separated him from all the wonder of the only existence possible. And the children listened eagerly, learning early to believe that somewhere far away there was real life. At times this place seemed very near, as when little Alexandre was sent to his father, who once had been the powerful governor of the islands and who still remained the patron of the family. Or when a letter came from Aunt Renaudin, their father's sister, who lived in that enchanted spot.

Although Josephine, as the embellishing biographer just quoted says, may have belonged to a family where more emphasis was placed on the simplicity of woman than on learning, her mother repeatedly insisted, when the child was ten years old, that something must be done about educating her. This necessarily meant the convent, and the father at last reluctantly consented to spend the money. The cheaper of two convents was selected: that of Les Dames de la Providence. Scarcely anything is known of the five years Josephine spent there. She learned without special eagerness the things that were then being taught: to spell passably, to twang the guitar and strum a little on the harpsichord, to sing in a small voice a few languorous songs; and she gained the knowledge of faith and Church necessary for a Catholic woman of her class. At the same time special stress was laid upon etiquette, which, as expressed in medical instruction, was taught by manikin: on deep curtsies as the girls bowed themselves out from the presence of a sister (for every noblewoman's aim in life was to be presented at court), modes of polite conversation for all probable social occasions, and finally, whether right or wrong, a little dancing. In these years at the convent, time, of which she had scarcely been conscious before, gradually began to seem long; for it then dawned on the girl that childhood was only a state of transition, a preparation for the real experience that was to follow. The girls talked about marriage, which they had been led to look upon as the fulfilment of their life,

and to this legitimate anticipation the soft whispers of the early-maturing Creole nature forebodingly added the sexual. Stories told by the Negro women and accounts of their goings on were exchanged in hushed voices; also tales of court learned by listening to their fathers and brothers, tales often years old, which had survived in the families from the times of the Regency and the youth of Louis XV.

When Josephine reached the age of fifteen, she was an unpromising mixture: the female form seemed rather out of proportion in her bulky, roundish body; her face was too fat, so her snub nose looked too small. She was aware of all this and hence grew more awkward and self-conscious. When she went home, she wandered through the house uneasily, felt its misery and neglect, and waited for the thing to come that must. Childhood had gone.



CHAPTER TWO



DEPARTURE

Josephine made no lasting friends during her years at the convent. Her sisters, although near her own age, were still children. Nothing is recorded concerning any activity in the house. Josephine was much alone. But her shyness and lack of assurance gradually disappeared. Marion and the other Negro women told her she was beautiful — and she was happy to believe them. Often she stood in front of the few, too small mirrors in her home. The brook which, hidden by shrubbery, flowed through the estate served as her best mirror. She adored bathing, she loved her nakedness and enjoyed having the Negro women stare at her in admiration. If not near the brook nor on the beach, she lay in a hammock, or on a divan in a darkened room of the house, dreaming and imagining the fulfilment of her desires. Clothes and jewels played an important role. She possessed less of these than any of her schoolmates at the convent. A few home-made mousseline gowns, some silk kerchiefs, a string of glass beads like those the Negresses wore — that was all. Otherwise flowers had to serve as ornament, or a chain of bright-coloured berries. Soon her longing to bedeck herself increased passionately: she had found an admirer. Tercier, a young officer lately arrived from France, had noticed her on his rides and had approached her. Josephine was Juliet's age, but a child of more tropical clime and, de-

spite her immature body, full of amorous curiosity. Moreover she had freedom to go where she pleased, and a few steps from the beach and the scattered paths there was complete seclusion. Tercier tells us in his memoirs that the companion of this brief early idyll had been the one great love of his life. But that was long, long afterwards, and the astounding career of that same young girl may have so stirred his imagination that his memory was compromised. It may safely be assumed that, fearing being forced into an unprofitable marriage, he withdrew from Josephine on one pretext or another without, as the saying went in those days, having altogether imperilled the girl's honour and virtue. Not much time intervened for Josephine to give way to lamentation and grief over the sudden ruin of her hopes and joys. For from the promised land of France, whose messenger Tercier seemed to have been, news shortly arrived which concerned her in a most wonderful way. The sender of this message, without whom the very name Tascher and the remembrance of this girl would have died away in oblivion long ago, was the aunt who lived in Paris. A little must now be noted concerning her and her circumstances, and the opportunity must be taken of alluding more definitely to the patron of the Tascher family.

It has already been stated that Josephine's paternal grandfather, by some unknown means, had won the interest of the newly appointed Governor. This ruler of almost absolute military and civil power was named François de Beauharnais. He had been appointed under circumstances which made his position doubly responsible: the news that England — without any declaration of war whatever — was sending a powerful fleet to take possession of the islands. Why Beauharnais, scarcely more than forty years of age, should have been selected is difficult to guess. Neither had he distinguished himself in the career of naval officer, nor did he belong to a family whose name alone would have given him claim to so high an office. It may even be that the family from which the new Lieutenant-

General and Governor descended was merely reputed to be noble because of some customary right, without being so in reality; because twenty years later when the son of this Beauharnais, who had been made Marquis in the mean time, tried to claim one of the privileges of high nobility — entrance into the King's carriage — he was refused several times, as not being entitled to it. Nevertheless François de Beauharnais, whose marriage had brought him riches and who possessed an agreeable presence, amiable manners, and brilliant conversation, must certainly have known how to make friends at court and gain position in society. Hence this attractive officer, of whom it was even said that he had "*du talent,*" when England threatened the most valuable colonial possession of France, was chosen as its defender and set forth deliberately for the islands.

The first real piece of good luck for the aged Gaspard-Joseph Tascher, after living thirty years on Martinique, was his meeting with this man. Beauharnais must do something for the sons with their hopeless military commissions, and above all he surely must help provide for the growing daughters. Everything went splendidly for the eldest, Marie-Désirée, who was beautiful, animated, and ambitious. Beauharnais and his wife took the girl into their home and promised to arrange a good marriage for her. The Governor himself was wedded to an exceedingly rich distant relative, of whom nothing more can be said except that this marriage had brought her little joy, and the lack of joy apparently had made her still more colourless. She probably expected that the many duties connected with her husband's position would take him away from the Governor's residence very often, hence she was satisfied to have the Tascher girl for company and indeed became more and more attached to her. But the Governor, contrary to his wife's expectations, was absent from home very little; he soon became infatuated with the young girl and apparently did not need to lose much time with his wooing. While they were on the watch for a good marriage, the girl,

under the very eyes of the unsuspecting wife, had her first taste of marriage. Her youthful sensibilities, her cleverness, and her ambition all attracted her to this man experienced in love and deeply enamoured of her. From what was merely intended to be an affair, it soon became for Beauharnais one of those passionate and lasting affections which frequently take possession of men in the afternoon of life, when, having long played with love, the empty heart seeks after something that will endure — “eternity of passion.”

So with a heavy heart the Governor resigned himself to arranging a marriage for his beloved one before the inevitable slander made it impossible. A young officer named Renaudin was chosen; he was of a good old military family, was also quite wealthy, and really fell in love with the pretty girl. Beauharnais succeeded in conquering the opposition of the relatives against the alliance. Even before the marriage had taken place, the girl obtained from the Governor every possible privilege that he could in any way grant to the Taschers. He was especially indulgent just then, owing to his melancholy over their separation, which would be at least temporary.

Beauharnais was so engrossed in his love-affair and in his anxiety to provide well for the girl that he had little time to worry about defending the islands. Guadeloupe, the principal target of British attack, begged repeatedly for troops and ships. But Beauharnais dawdled and dawdled. When finally, following the girl's marriage to Renaudin, he decided after endless weeks to start, it was too late. The relief army could only confirm the fact that Guadeloupe was already gone, so he admitted the loss of the colony and hastily returned to Martinique, laying the blame for the defeat on the defenders, who had implored him in vain for help. Beauharnais then court-martialled some officers of great merit and — what weighed more heavily — of good name. This troubled him far less than what was happening to the young Renaudins. For quite suddenly the infatuation and the submission of the young husband ended; he

raged, maltreated his wife, and cried out to the whole world that the chastity of the beautiful Désirée was — well, what it was.

France, of course, was far away, but finally it leaked out that a colony had been lost. However good Beauharnais connexions may have been, the officers he had court-martialled also had their followers. Hence, as irrefutable facts had been submitted, he was finally removed and recalled to Paris to render an account. Meanwhile the brief married state of the Renaudins suddenly ended, and the young husband left for France. When it was quite certain that Beauharnais's role as Governor was finished, Désirée Renaudin, who had returned to the house of her benefactor, likewise decided to go to France. The legal proceedings which she intended to institute against her brutal husband served as a pretext. As for the rest, she had now placed her affairs completely in Beauharnais's hands and dreaded as little as he did answering for the fact that his love for her had cost France a rich and beautiful colony. To keep up appearances she decided to undertake the journey in advance of the deposed Governor. But there was still something for her to do before she left. Madame de Beauharnais already had one son who had remained in France; she was awaiting confinement again, and Désirée Renaudin was to be the godmother of the expected child. After holding the new-born babe, who was named Alexandre, over the baptismal font, she persuaded the mother not to expose him to the perils of a long and dangerous sea-voyage, but to leave him on the island in care of the Tascher family. Only after receiving assurance that this would be done, and implicitly believing that the Beauharnais were soon to follow her, did she sail from Martinique. She never saw the island again, but, contrary to the expectation of her family, she kept her promise to remember those whom she left behind. It was many months later before the Beauharnais family also set sail. The deposed Governor, as already stated, found a bride for Madame Renaudin's older brother and recommended him to his successor in office. Little

Alexandre remained in Martinique a few years longer, brought the Taschers an annual allowance, and became the playmate of Josephine and her sisters. Later he scarcely remembered this circumstance, and certainly with no emotion.

Very cleverly Beauharnais had allowed enough time to elapse before his return so that all his connexions could intercede for him. When finally the day of accounting arrived, everything passed off even more smoothly than he had expected. Consequently the whole affair was soon forgiven and forgotten. Beauharnais was overwhelmed with honours, received the title of Admiral of the Fleet, a sumptuous pension, and finally elevation in rank — still more desired — to the title of Marquis.

After numberless malicious attacks on both sides, Madame Renaudin was divorced from her husband; the court awarded her not only maintenance but a legacy to be paid at Renaudin's death. Of course with these promises the matter ended. But Beauharnais was there. According to the custom, Désirée Renaudin had retired to a convent after the divorce. When she left it, however, she moved to "her old friends, the Beauharnais," not taking it to heart that the Marchioness from that time on preferred to live with relatives in the country. Madame Renaudin was determined to assert her position, and this was not difficult. Advancing age narrows the circle of hopes and the desires of life; whatever promises security is enhanced in value. Hence Beauharnais granted to this much younger woman more and more power over his destiny, not caring that the questionable arrangement in his household rendered association with most people of society difficult and finally impossible. His ambition was fulfilled and his social needs satisfied by Désirée and a few intimate friends; and so, guided by his mistress's pretty hands, his life followed its agreeable course. His eldest son was carefully reared, married early, and gave the father little anxiety. After the younger one returned from Martinique, Madame Renaudin made it her

steadfast aim to gain influence over him; she knew how to flatter his early-awakened vanity, and, since the life of his sad and lonely mother had ended, "the dear godmother" became to him all a mother could be to a son who, as seemed fitting, spent the greater part of his formative years away from home.

Thus Madame Renaudin had made a safe place for herself in the world, and in exchange had staked her all. But Beauharnais was growing old and his health was no longer good. So she thought of the future. Not that she needed to worry much about her means of support in years to come: the Marquis was generous and had planned for her safety to the best of his ability. But the entire income would at his death pass to his sons. Besides there was something else: even if she now had no position in the world, Beauharnais's devotion kept everything hostile away from her, and with him she was secure. But afterwards? She was by no means inclined ever to leave this Beauharnais circle which she had made so completely her own. In reality the affection of her god-child guaranteed little for the future; if Alexandre were to marry, she would soon be to him only a memory of an outlived past. So with Alexandre's growing up the resolve matured within her mind to anticipate this danger by choosing a bride for him who would fit into her schemes. Early marriages were common in those days, especially among people of position. Alexandre was in his eighteenth year; it was worth thinking about.

Désirée's brother in Martinique had three girls, one of whom must become Alexandre's wife. The Marquis, to whom a woman of this Tascher family had given so many good years, was quickly persuaded to agree to the plan. And from the Tascher family scarcely any opposition was to be expected. The second daughter, who was about fourteen years old, was selected as being the most suitable in age for Alexandre. So the letter to Martinique was written. Tascher was asked to bring the girl to France, she would be

given a final touch of the proper education, and Aunt Renaudin would provide the dowry. But when the letter reached Martinique, the little girl whose fate was to be decided in this fashion had already been removed from all earthly vicissitudes. Catherine-Désirée Tascher had died in her fourteenth year following a brief illness of fever.

But the two other girls were there, and this bit of worldly glitter must be snatched for one of them, the house and plantation of Trois-Ilets being no better off than before. The master himself, though scarcely yet forty, had led a life which, together with the effect of the climate, had made him old and infirm. He had become almost domesticated. Port Royal and Sainte-Lucie had lost their special charm; and when he forgot his daily cares, all he wanted was a good physician, and reward for his military service, to which he thought he was entitled and which seemed to grow more important with each passing year. So he wrote to his sister and his noble benefactor that death had snatched away the daughter on whom such honoured choice had fallen, but that he had two remaining daughters: one of course was only twelve years old, but that would allow time to dignify preparation of the event; the other, being fifteen, might be considered already too old, but she had a very lovely skin and beautiful arms and wanted nothing more than to go to Paris.

In the letter proposing the marriage, something flattering had been said of Alexandre's appearance — he moreover had never been consulted — and the fact was mentioned that he had an income of forty thousand livres, which would be increased. In the reply to Tascher's letter little was said of Alexandre. It stated simply that one of the Tascher daughters was desired and that, while Yeyette might be too old, she would be considered if difficulties arose concerning the younger one.

These difficulties in fact did arise in the opposition of the mother. So it was Josephine — scarcely able to endure the long intervals be-

tween the letters — who became the fiancée of a young officer in France about whom, except for a few hazy recollections of their early childhood, she knew only that he served in a smart regiment, was considered good-looking, and was called Vicomte. In the time that intervened before her departure every rumour that floated from the great world outside, about life at court and beautiful clothes, furnished food for her restless dreams, all pervaded by an endless expectation of love. Tascher had written to his sister of the lack of money for necessary travelling expenses, so after these fears had been allayed, after lengthy preparations for the journey and weighty deliberations concerning the choice of ship had been made, it was finally decided that the father should accompany the girl to France. Meanwhile Josephine had reached the age of sixteen. It is not known if she left the life on the island with a heavier heart than her aunt before her. Homesickness commenced on the way, for on the sea-voyage, which lasted several months, the sky took on the grey hue of autumn, and the air was sharp and cold; the ailing father, ill-humoured and racked with pain, kept to his cabin, and Josephine had scarcely enough covers to warm her shivering body. The letters sent in advance arrived too late, hence no one was waiting to meet the timid girl and her father, who was gravely ill. They landed in Brest on a cloudy day, wet and cold, late in the autumn of 1779. In the same year a boy from Corsica, ten years of age, for the first time set foot on the French mainland, which impressed him as a hostile country. His name was Napoleon Buonaparte.



CHAPTER THREE



VICOMTESSE
DE BEAUHARNAIS

A modern author expresses the opinion that a marriage arranged under such circumstances as the one toward which Josephine found herself headed is destined in advance to a bad end. This opinion, certainly held by many people of the present time, is contradicted by the fact that in the days when such marriages were considered matters of course, there were really few bad marriages. Those were the times when cohabitation stood as the symbol of a conscious and closely knit social order, looked upon as the desire of God. The belief that society is higher than the individual makes marriage a social, not an individual, institution; thus the universal determination to allow no doubts to arise concerning individual non-essentials was decisively important to the stability of society. More was expected of the "marriage of convenience" in those days than now. Then a young man and woman from the same social stratum, with corresponding aims in life, held submissive to the requirements of society by position and religion, were joined together in wedlock by parents or relatives. They were both young, and submission was unquestioned until they had a family of their own. Then only was the purpose of the union realized. If there were discords, some compromise had to be arranged, and the common interest of the couple,

by that time also parents, naturally brought about adjustment. After all, such disagreements were found everywhere, and no importance was attached to them. Each individual marriage was good because all marriages were good. Of course a cohesive social order was taken for granted, as was also the will to conform to it. Where this system weakens, where the long-established conception breaks down and the new has not yet become generally accepted, then of course there arises immediately the crisis of the marriage institution. The individual makes demands that are beyond all bounds, and the impossible is undertaken: to find a solution for two people, which must necessarily be applied to all, as if that solution were the only feasible one.

From the history of Josephine's marriage the opinion is eventually deduced that, viewing all the circumstances and the character of the two people themselves, everything had to happen as it did. It is not an idle game with fate to say that forty years earlier a marriage contracted between the same people and under the same circumstances would have been different. For in the time of Louis XV there still existed, although weak and uncertain, that legalized order which Louis XVI himself made doubtful when he began to question it.

Alexandre de Beauharnais had few objections to the marriage arranged for him. Early entrance into matrimony was part of the good form which he held in high esteem. He would of course have preferred the family of his fiancée to be of greater importance, but in his inmost heart he must have realized how matters stood with his own, and he moreover expected much from his personal talents. Above all, he hoped the little Tascher girl to whom he was betrothed would present a good appearance and thus aid his advancement. Any objections that arose after the first meeting with the girl had little weight, for everyone had to submit to parental



ALEXANDRE DE BEAUHARNAIS

choice. The fact that marriage would give him the right to use the entire income from his share of the family fortune made this submission much easier.

Through no fault of his own he was delayed in arriving to meet the Taschers. He had put on his gala uniform, the white tunic faced with silver-grey, cut in a style which was a compromise between fashion and army regulation. He had prepared the most graceful speeches, but he confronted a girl from the colonies, awkwardly dressed, blushing, and embarrassed in her utterances. . . . He wrote to his father: "Mademoiselle de la Pagerie will perhaps not seem to you so pretty as you expect, but the modesty and gentleness of her character surpass everything that could have been told you." Masson says of this letter that the girl was praised in such a way that one would have thought the father instead of the son were going to marry her.

Most decidedly the young Sub-Lieutenant was more the individual than he was part of that powerful social system to which his aspirations belonged. Above everything else he was ambitious. Not in the old legitimate sense — to win for the family name an honoured position, and for his natural talents the proper sphere of activity. Rather was his ambition of the kind which today we should call snobbery or the effort to arrive. He belonged to the new nobility. In the letter containing the marriage proposal his father gave him the title Chevalier. But Alexandre himself used the title Vicomte without having any legal right to it. Since the death of Louis XV something had happened to the monarchy — little did it concern Alexandre to find out what it was. He perceived symptoms alone: that on the one hand it was still well to have a high-sounding title, while on the other it no longer mattered very much. He instinctively realized what was desired and what worked, and, above all, he knew that the important thing was what men did, not what they were. The world around him confirmed this opinion. Those

of his class of nobility as a rule paid small heed to King and State or service to them, but laid great stress on taking advantage of any source of power. Unselfish souls like Malesherbes and Turgot, who truly longed to serve, did not belong to the time. Their speedy fall subsequently proved this. It was worth while to represent something; and to this end education, circumstances, and his own determination had well prepared the young, handsome, and extraordinarily clever second son of the new Marquis.

Louis XIV embodied in the king all powers of the State that had survived from old privileges; Louis XV during the whole of his long reign had, of course without the genius of his predecessor, yet with tenacity and sovereign mastery, tried to defend the royal omnipotence. But he was jealous only of what he conceived to be powerful. He had let the mind alone, which he thought impotent. Hence there arose under the self-consuming absolutism questioners and critics, coming largely from the realm of the third estate: those philosophers who, in the joy of inquiry and the passion for clarity and with their newly discovered idea of humanity, thought that the old State had ended. Their influence of course went far beyond their intentions. About 1770, as at a later time in Germany, to be a philosopher became the fashion, and society glossed over the meaning of statements when it should have doubted their sense. The wondrous art of conversation which had grown out of the old social life was practised only by elderly people, its place being taken more and more by rhetoric, love of fine phrasing, humanitarian monologues, the desire to glitter, the wish to dazzle. Where, before, the clear, keen, experienced knowledge of man in his relations to others had been considered valuable — the practical judgment of his life, expressed concisely but gracefully, from experience — now the impractical mind was puffed up inordinately. Men spoke in loud voices — borrowing the ideas of Rousseau and Raynal demanded it — and this very drawing-room rhetoric concerning principles (the

application thereof necessarily causing the destruction of the salon and its attendant conditions) really seems to have been the first practice in debating for the National Assembly.

As in Russia, from the period of the Dekabrists to the Cadets and the Social Revolutionists, the aristocrats from time to time participated in all the games of the foes of the State, whose partners and beneficiaries they were, from the few genuine fanatics to the many who talked about the Revolution just to be in fashion, so it happened with the aristocrats in the last decade of the *ancien régime* in France. A fastidious discontent, an unobjective love of play, caught the ideas of the philosophers. Juggling with them gave no real suspicion of their application. Education and training had kept the young conspicuously unsophisticated concerning politics and government. With the decay of the system from within, no real political arguments developed, but, thanks to the philosophers, there arose an earnest though academic discussion of society, humanity, and similar subjects.

The Marquis de Beauharnais noticed all this as little as the average person of his generation. Without paying very close attention, he selected for his sons a tutor who had been recommended by distinguished families. From this Patricol, who thought himself a clever mind, but who was simply a rhetorician after the fashion of the day, the older son, who was the quieter, learned just what his limited desire for knowledge was disposed to absorb; but the younger one listened to the philosophical rumblings and rhetorical promises more than to fundamental instruction and at once was lost in them. In order to study a foreign language the two boys were sent to the University of Heidelberg with their tutor and remained there two years. According to Patricol's idea, the task of educating young noblemen of that period was not so much the requirement of earnest study as the imparting of enlightened opinions supported by sufficient citations. Hence both the Beauharnais sons brought home with

them from the years spent in Heidelberg a rather jumbled and complicated result. Above all, this condition was due to nibbling at the fruit of the Storm-and-Stress poetry. With a vast treasure of quotations from the literature which was mirrored in the " *In Tyrannos* " mood, a thorough knowledge of German rulers and noble personages agreed excellently.¹

Soon after their return, Patricol was offered a very lucrative position as private tutor in one of the most important families of the French nobility; he was engaged as instructor for the two young Rohans by their uncle, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld. He asked permission to take with him his pupil Alexandre as companion to the two youths, and the granting of this concession was of great consequence to the ambitious young man. He saw and experienced the outward life of a truly great house, the pretentiousness and nonchalance, the ironic arrogance; and besides all this the place was a centre of cultivation for the intellectual fad of playing at philosophy. The Duc de La Rochefoucauld was the perfect personification of the critical type of the period. He would return from a court banquet and after witty gossip would comment with malicious glee on the approaching fall of a minister possessing great talent and pure motives; then he would talk pathetically of the *Contrat social* (the book of which Burckhardt said that its appearance was a greater event than the Seven Years' War); next he would talk about the fate of mankind, the emancipation of slaves, and a better future — talk, talk; and with all this, he was a great lord, educated and unsuspecting, not understanding the meaning of his own words at such a time. This man became for a while the ideal of Alexandre Beauharnais, an ideal he tried to imitate in manners and conduct, in ideas and the method of expressing them, without really ever notic-

¹ If perhaps the reader of this book may object to there being so much said of Beauharnais and so little of Bonaparte, may we refer to the fact that everyone knows much of Bonaparte or can easily find it out? Very little is generally known about Beauharnais, and in this biography he has certainly enough significance.

ing the true dignity, kindness, and greatness of heart which made this dilettante at all events a lovable person.

When Alexandre, through the powerful influence of the Duke, obtained a position as sub-lieutenant in one of the most favoured regiments, his education was really ended. In general the years of study are from eighteen to twenty-five (not referring to the few blessed souls who learn always). During that period what is imparted to the mind is taken in. We often perceive people forty or fifty years old, when obliged in conversation to think of something higher, readily bring forth the old equipment of mind and spirit which they acquired during those early years and draw from the books of their youth. There is no difference in the experiences of civilization and society: most people in those same years form their habits of conduct, their style, and their demeanour. Frequently it seems that lives of shorter duration mature more quickly. What we observe in the lives and works of the great who matured early can also be traced in the behaviour of lesser souls. Thus Alexandre Beauharnais's character in his eighteenth year was already formed just as it would have developed in later years: he was vain, reaching out after self-knowledge without perceiving his completely individual bondage to the age in which he lived; yearning for public honours without deeming it necessary to consider the risk; with clever understanding treating ideas as ornaments, according to the fashion. Today he would be called an intellectual fop, graceful, dapper, and unscrupulous, keeping style in mind above everything else. How early this is true of him is proved by the letter written to his father in praise of his betrothed, when he was only eighteen years old; no less by his last letter — one of the vainest epistles ever penned by one who was doomed to die.

One glance at a creature so completely different, together with the peculiar sensitiveness of a young man socially ambitious, who constantly had to bear in mind that his own position was not free

from criticism, did not leave Alexandre long in doubt of the little Tascher girl's worth as a social personage. Willingly and in very fine phrases he spoke of the necessity of education and the possibility of elevating human nature. But not for a moment did he think of being in earnest about applying these principles. He accepted the marriage: it was desired, and there was compensation through the freedom he thus obtained in the management of his money.

Madame Renaudin, who had brought about this betrothal, also came to Brest to meet her brother and niece. She had seen enough of the great world, though only from the edge, to realize how Alexandre felt when he saw Josephine, with her impossible clothes and her curtsies. But she knew that she herself had been just such a girl from the colonies, so she trusted to woman's gift of adaptiveness and resolved to help with all her might.

The endless journey over drenched roads, with the father complaining of constant pain, with the young man to whom she was affianced frightening her with his compliments, with the aunt carrying on an incessant conversation about things unintelligible to her — all made a miserable bridal journey for a sensitive girl of sixteen. Dripping snow, wretched dawns that were freezing cold, watching over and over for one intelligible kindly word from the handsome Alexandre. . . . If the mulatto whose chill grey hand always reached out for hers in the carriage had not been along, Josephine very often could not have held back her tears until she was alone in her room at the lodging-places. But finally they said: "Tomorrow we shall be in Paris, tomorrow. . . ." The rapture and longing she had felt in all the years of her childhood every time the name of that city had been mentioned again warmed her heart a little. She woke from her stupor and began to whisper little thoughts to her aunt, like the birds in the great forests of her island home — many hopes and wishes. She even tried to laugh, and laughter came so easily that it took little to make her do it. Madame Renaudin listened and was

less critical of the snub-nosed, rather fat little creature. But the Lieutenant had already assumed his courteous attitude, and hence she seemed so perfect to him that he took no notice of such small changes.

Finally the carts and wagons on the rough road increased in number. They had reached the outskirts of Paris. Fortifications, miserable barracks, stretches of land covered with rubbish and all the waste of a large city — their lovely country-houses not far away, crowding one upon another, and finally the city gate. There was still quite a long way through the dark, poorly lighted streets to the hôtel in the rue Thévenot near the rue Saint-Denis, which the Marquis de Beauharnais had lately acquired. Josephine saw little of the house, for they arrived at night. It was not a very large palace, but it had resounding staircases and high ceilings; the servants, carrying candles, led the way over carpeted halls, and the large dining-room was illumined by two great chandeliers; everything seemed like a real fairy castle. Here she was to be allowed to live, and outside was Paris, with all its wondrous promise! The handsome old Marquis, with the broad ribbon of his order, embraced her affectionately and called her “ my daughter ”; Aunt Renaudin was very good to her and told her a great deal about the beautiful clothes they were going to buy and the fine linen to be embroidered with the name and coronet. The wedding was to take place soon; indeed, very soon. Madame Renaudin of course did not give the reason for this haste, which was that she did not feel sure of Alexandre or of the Beauharnais relatives who were raging against this marriage with all their might.

The morning after the glamorous arrival brought painful reality: the fairy castle stood in a narrow street shut in by high houses, and less light came into the rooms through the windows than at home when the shutters were closed. However, the first drive with her aunt in the beautiful coach to the shops and the establishments of

seamstress and milliner poured balm over her easily consoled spirits. In the days that followed, Josephine's heart would surely have been broken if her youth and her natural disposition, which was satisfied with the smallest comfort, had not helped her to overlook what was very apparently to be her future. Alexandre most decidedly was not affectionate, but perhaps that did not suit the time of courtship — afterwards it would change. He was very handsome, which was even more than she needed to be in love with him. From her dreams of Paris, she gradually began to question her aunt. Was not the Beauharnais family very distinguished and hence would she not be presented at court? Would it not be soon? The answers were always indefinite and rather confused. They would surely have a great deal of brilliant company? Alexandre was rich, so they themselves would be able to give banquets? Perhaps she ought to take more dancing-lessons? Josephine did not understand that the hazy and comforting replies meant no. On the whole she did not at all comprehend the language of her new surroundings, so indirect and deceptive. And how could she, with her ignorance of the customs of the great world outside, have understood the first circumstance by which she hoped to enter that great world: her marriage? She had expected splendour and magnificence and pompous names; instead of this, at the signing of the marriage contract there was "no high-sounding signature which, according to custom, would bear witness to patronage, connexion, and relationship, such as redound to one's honour."

The church ceremony took place on the 13th of September in Noisy-le-Grand, where the country-house which Madame Renaudin had given her niece as a wedding-gift was located. Any child of respected family would have refused to have a marriage celebrated in a village church like that and would never have forgiven her parents-in-law if the day of honour had not attained its splendour by the attendance of a suitable number of highly esteemed men and women. Josephine did not understand, and her father submitted,

after his sister had made it clear to him that the whole Beauharnais kinship had absented itself, and that the entire affair could not have been arranged otherwise.

Madame Renaudin advised her niece above all else that the newly wedded wife was to secure for herself, 'before everything, mastery over the sensitive faculties of her husband. Wondrous advice for a seventeen-year-old girl! Madame Renaudin of course forgot that she herself had been much older and in full maturity when she became the mistress of the Marquis — and that he had been a man of experience in love-affairs, not a twenty-year-old youth. Josephine was more than willing to follow her aunt's advice. Her whole life seemed to her to have been a preparation for that which had now begun and which gave promise of greater and greater delight. She still thought herself shy and foolish in her desire and longing, for all she really wished was to learn how to give and receive happiness. . . .

But every creature arrives at an age when everything that has ever occurred seems as if it were on the way to something else. There are women whose lives seem complete at twenty, yet who, rather girlish and eternally young, keep on smiling through the later years; and there are matrons whose personality never develops until maturity and who only in this later period are able to impart the charm of their existence. Josephine, whose name even today is synonymous in France with the word "alluring," was really a woman of thirty years. She was a swan developing at last from an ugly duckling. But Alexandre Beauharnais thought only of the latter. To him this wife who had been chosen for him was simply an institution to which he submitted until he had made something more of himself. For a time this boy of twenty years may have found pleasure in her girlish freshness, all the more because Josephine, unlike most of the Frenchwomen of her time, took great care of her body — a Creole heritage — and during her whole life laid stress on cleanliness. Civi-

lized settlers in tropical countries learned this from the natives. But however much Josephine may have been in love, it takes time to become a wife; if tenderness and longing are to be the developing influences in the first experiences, the desired embrace must be enshrouded by privacy, just as the love-chamber is protected by surrounding walls; such an intimacy is the essential joy of existence for the individual soul.

After all that has been said of Alexandre de Beauharnais, it is easy to see that the role which vanity plays in the love-affairs of foppish young men was with him most important. When the innocence of a girl charms a young man above all else, the attraction passes as quickly as the innocence itself. And if, engrossed solely with his own personality, he is inflamed by the beauty of a woman, this flame will burn as long and as brightly as it also enraptures others, and the more so as beauty changes into elegance. If the young man, instead of feeling always insecure, is anxious to link himself with society and seeks a woman for the quality of her mind, this mind will have the greater attraction for him just as it affects others more brilliantly. In any case love, above all, should be a magnificent display at Vanity Fair — or it falls from that height into the social relations of life and unavoidably becomes part of everyday existence. Of this it is better not to say too much.

Josephine longed to play about like a kitten and have a never ending honeymoon; but after only a few weeks she received scarcely any response to her faint-hearted allurements. She tried all her girlish arts of seduction, put the loveliest red and green striped madras on her loose chestnut-brown hair, dressed herself in mousseline from Martinique — and Alexandre thought of the duchesses and marchionesses he had seen from afar! Josephine laughed readily, but the ambitious and vain have no sense of humour. Josephine told him many stories of home — he yawned, scarcely concealing his boredom, and at once launched forth into one of his tirades on some

subject such as people of his class heard from the philosophers of their time, full of spiritual and cultural conceit (how astonishingly far they had got with their phrases!). Josephine did not understand, asked questions, began to wonder at the next incomprehensible word which was so hard for her to grasp; and like all people who learn things only half, and very poorly at that, Alexandre, whose conversation and writing fairly dripped with pedagogy, grew at once impatient. Instead of answering her and explaining, he broke off what he was saying with the pained expression of a person who is not understood, or else was content to remark that Josephine still had very much indeed to learn in order to develop her mind. How she should set about it he never mentioned. Thus he frightened her — darkened the source of her happy naturalness, though to drink from it would have been good for him. He gave nothing; neither did he know how to take. Kind words became rare, conversation a precious occurrence; and caresses were festal gifts. But Josephine did not reason nor bear any grudge; she waited and hoped and was thankful for every one of the scanty favours. Alexandre began to leave her, pleading first his duties as a nobleman and officer; soon he stayed away longer with no excuse — and Josephine waited. Madame Renaudin had little time for her, as her father had remained in Paris to await the granting of the “well-merited reward,” one of the crumbs of plenty which the kings had taken from the nobility and now tossed back as a sign of favour. And as the unusual winter made the sick man very miserable, his sister undertook for him the countless errands to present requests and petitions and repeated the usual little speeches full of conceit and bothersome begging. So when Josephine was not sitting with the mulatto woman beside the fire, she stood at the window looking down the gloomy street and waiting for Alexandre.

Thus about ten weeks of marital life passed by. To Alexandre this seemed enough for the present. In early March of that year —

1780 — there were a few warm days, and a little sunlight fell through the windows of the rue Thévenot. Josephine dreamed of driving, hoping at last to see Versailles and to ride with Alexandre. Then came the news which he had withheld until the last moment: he must return to his regiment at Brest. How could Josephine know that only a word from the Duc de La Rochefoucauld would have obtained for Alexandre any extension of his leave of absence that he desired? And how could she suspect to be a pure invention the statement that young officers were not allowed to take their young wives with them into the garrison? She cried until her swollen red face looked “utterly impossible” — and had to let him go. Now there was left for her not even the waiting for him at the window.

At decorous and rather long intervals letters arrived from him full of well-phrased speeches, sounding like the epistles of an old, unfeeling, eternal pedant. They informed Josephine, who never dreamed that he was meanwhile making a name for himself in the castles of Brittany as a good dancer, of the importance of a harmonious development of the mind and soul toward which he was striving fervently. For quite a long time she accepted admiringly these protestations of a noble and aspiring mind, her only present joy being an occasional morning walk to the rue Royale. After many dreary months, however, she finally learned that the garrison of the regiment had been changed, and she was enraptured at the thought that Alexandre would be in Paris for a little while. He arrived. Josephine's existence perhaps had become for him an entirely abstract affair. When he saw her again, he was annoyed; he nagged at her more than ever and was in haste to shorten his stay. At meal-time, however, he could not refrain from telling his father of making the acquaintance of many of the most highly esteemed families of Brittany. It was unavoidable that something should escape about hunting, out-of-door repasts, and balls. A slight frown made Josephine's childish brow pensive and sad. She so longed for his con-

confidence. But, little as she knew of the great world, she had reached the point where a woman's instinct whispers the first warning.

In his enlarged social circle Alexandre had been observing carefully, and he had made a discovery, confirmed by the intimacy he zealously sought with the nobility living near the new garrison town of Verdun. This observation was that, from the lax demands of society which were of benefit to him, only too many others had profited as well. An age of parvenus had arrived; newly acquired wealth, or inherited prestige in middle-class society and official service, pressed eagerly after the cheaply attained titles. Whoever was able to buy an estate which could be considered a castle — that is, the privileged possession of a noble family — might be certain that the title connected with it would be transferred to him. As in our own age during the Habsburg agony its last sovereign hoped to make loyalty secure by the feverish distribution of prerogatives and honours, so, in far greater measure, Louis XVI followed a similar course as conditions grew continually more and more precarious. With all his intelligence, Alexandre Beauharnais considered himself above these busy upstarts,¹ as if he indeed were La Rochefoucauld or Polignac; he told himself that it was important to gain a sure footing among the hereditary nobility, to which end, in addition to the lure of belonging to them, his ever improving rhetoric should be of great assistance. His learning, which he valued so highly, consisted in skimming through the history of France in order to find families whose acquaintance he desired, or in cramming his memory with maxims and paradoxes so that he could talk smartly concerning the political conditions of the time, varying his opinion to suit the person with whom he was conversing, and reiterating that the situation should be changed. Besides, he tried to

¹ It was the time in which the son of the watch-maker Caron called himself de Beaumarchais, and the future husband of the beautiful Térézia Cabarrus (afterwards Mme Tallien), Marquis de Fontenay. The people quickly grew accustomed to using those names.

make his mother's relatives, who bore good old names, forget that he was also the son of his father, who had been such a poor husband, meanwhile not mentioning his own marriage at all. For this plain little girl from the colonies, who lacked all style and who grew more and more sentimental, was only a hindrance on his road to success; after each new contact with one of the clever and fashionable ladies of the day he became more certain. He enjoyed the intellectual and morally unscrupulous quality of these shrewd and skeptical women who lived to the full that type of life to which the "*liaisons dangereuses*" bore witness. He delighted to hear from a pretty mouth the latest utterance of Rivarol, combined with a malicious remark about some friend who perchance had just granted her favour to a still more influential patron of her husband. Even more highly did he value these women's permission to let him spread before them the variegated plumage of his rhetoric. And when one of these pretty women in her ennui once took him to bed with her, he was very careful that it should be whispered abroad. For in those days discretion in love-affairs was never a thing of honour; the opposite was the richest spice of happenings which all too readily became monotonous through a lack of their being individual in character.

And now as to Josephine. . . . He wrote more of his sedate, didactic letters. But the little girl from Martinique was entirely too unsophisticated to let the truth, nobility, and beauty which Alexandre so highly praised console her or replace what she began to understand more definitely was meant by connubial bliss.

At first she had made an obedient attempt to read. But in the convent she was instructed in reading no more thoroughly than in anything else; and at home there had been few books and fewer readers. If people had any leisure time in the colonies, they met together and tried, in well-chosen words, to take part in the French world of conversation. In the few books which Josephine attempted

at that time, she found again the obscure path into which Alexandre's talk was always accustomed to lead. And as distrust began to creep into her admiration for her husband's higher society, the torrent of unintelligible words lost its magic power and became a part of that world which held something hostile to her, something that threatened her love. She longed to be sweet and submissive, she wanted to wait for his return, but something happened to her that made the waiting more and more painful, and the comfort from his letters much scantier: she was pregnant. Ill at ease in her own body, waiting sad and alone, and weary in advance of her husband's wordy consolation, she moved from the dismal residence in the rue Thévenot to the country-house where her wedding had been celebrated. There she passed the summer, sitting nearly all the time at the window, depressed and lonely, staring at the rain that seemed as if it never would end. As her time drew closer, she returned to Paris. Alexandre was notified. His wife's approaching confinement gave him a suitable motive for beginning the long leave of absence which he had just obtained, as he had grown very tired of garrison life. For Josephine, her condition was the occasion she desired to pour out her heart to her husband and to give way to tears and complaints. Alexandre gazed upon her distorted features; there was no end to her scenes of wretchedness. His ready intention to consider the moment when a child should be born to him as awe-inspiring and sublime soon changed into a feeling of pain and vexation at his most uncomfortable environment. He had of course seen that his acquaintances among the old established families looked upon the birth of an heir as an event of great importance; but when he beheld the tiny creature, seemingly scarcely human, the feeling of exaltation he had determined to experience did not materialize, even though the new-born babe was a boy. Hardly had the child, hurriedly and without ceremony, been baptized Eugène-Rose when the young father hastened to celebrate

his return to Paris. Viewing his disdain of both the marriage and its fruit on the one hand, and the restlessly eager ambitions of Alexandre Beauharnais on the other, a later generation cannot refrain from a sad and sinister smile as it casts a glance on the fate of this child whose path led so far above the most ambitious dreams of his father.

Although Madame Renaudin never for a moment regretted the arrangement of this unsuccessful marriage, she now thought, since the presence of the child warranted it, that the time had arrived when something should be done for Josephine. First she persuaded the gentle old Marquis to call his son's attention to the wretched existence of the little wife. But, in the face of Alexandre's oratory, the only outlet which the father found was impotent bluster. Madame Renaudin herself was met with a well-prepared smoothness and the trick of an elaborate and magnificently delivered answer showing how much wrong Josephine had done her husband's lofty soul with her lack of understanding, her small jealousies, and her petty habits of thought. Finally Madame Renaudin tried to have the former well-meaning tutor Patricol act as mediator. But that did not help matters. He brought back mathematically precise requirements of all Josephine must become in order to be a suitable and worthy wife for a man like Alexandre.

While the young mother vainly brooded in her misery about a possible way along which she might take the first steps toward becoming such a paragon of all the contradictory virtues which Alexandre demanded, he enjoyed untiringly the delights of a world in which the talk of virtue easily compensated for the lack of it. Even Madame Renaudin found it ever more difficult to get in touch with him. He danced, played, made love, and used every possible opportunity to pave a way for himself from good homes to still better ones. Hence, from a supply of affection at no time very rich, he wasted so much on trifling society friendships and

admiring avowals that Madame Renaudin saw his attachment to her, which had been indeed well earned, rapidly diminish. She therefore decided that there was only one way to hold even a small part of him for herself and her pitiful little niece: she cleverly used her last atom of influence to get him away from the society for love of which his eager and wide-awake ambition would soon destroy every vestige of feeling for his own unimportant family. With Patricol's assistance she succeeded in convincing Alexandre that his education could only be completed by a journey to the cradle of the Latin world of intellect. His mental vanity being thus flattered, he consented to the voyage, apparently with reluctance. But when scarcely started, he contrived to ennoble the unwillingness he felt on leaving the joys of Paris into a passion, and like Ovid's *Tristia* talked of the affliction of a lonely soul striving for purification in a foreign land. He never wrote a single word about the other Frenchmen travelling or living in Italy, and the fact that the same kind of society for which he longed was to be found just as well in the Italian cities. His melancholy at the sight of ruins, quotations from newly learned fragments of the old poets and historians — sentimentally embellished with phrases about homesickness — that was all the family learned of Alexandre's trip to Italy. Even such sentiments reached Josephine chiefly in a roundabout way through her aunt and her father-in-law.

The child was a pathetic toy, like a little animal. As was the entire marriage, it was a tiny hold, fed by sentiment and tenderness, on Josephine's illusions and dreams as life passed on. She no longer understood how things were going with Alexandre. But with the awakening after child-birth of a new perception of living, fostered by spite, a sense of injury, and the dreariness of her existence, there arose stronger and sweeter than ever before the hope of life, stirring her blood with a thousand young desires. Meanwhile there was something fresh and happy in the decision to leave the

dismal house in the rue Thévenot. A new residence had been bought in the section which, then just beginning to be the vogue, has been to our present day the centre of elegant Parisian dwellings: a little north-west of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and not far from the Church of St. Philippe du Roule. This is still the spot where fashionable Paris celebrates the formal ceremonies publicly proclaiming its membership in the Church.

Besides the removal from the rue Thévenot itself, this moving, with its breaking of routine, its consultations over new arrangements, the happy confusion, the running back and forth between the two houses, furnished that excitement and diversion in which a childlike heart can often forget its sorrows. Besides, Josephine's father had been nursing his illness a very long time and had enjoyed the hospitality of the Marquis as well as costing his sister a considerable amount of money. He was now sufficiently recovered to trot rather stiffly through the streets of Paris, so he took his daughter with him on his last, though utterly hopeless, begging expeditions; on the way he related to her his past life from the years when he was a page down to the very present, thus giving Josephine a knowledge of the city where she lived so sadly in a narrow domestic world.

In addition to the decoration procured for him, Tascher had expected an increase in pension. But every zealous effort was stranded on the miserable state of government finances. Hence, as the letters from Martinique became more and more urgent and as there was nothing further to be hoped for in Paris, he decided to depart, taking with him the remnant of a large loan from his sister instead of the expected increase in pension. Although Tascher may not have been a very devoted father, the spectacle of his daughter's youthful marriage had so greatly lessened his enthusiasm for the brilliant son-in-law that he left for his home without even awaiting Alexandre's return from Italy.

A few months after the father-in-law's departure Alexandre

came home, and in a most unusual manner showed himself friendly to Josephine: he had resolved to do this for his father's sake and Madame Renaudin's. Perhaps a prettier dress opened his eyes to the fact that Josephine was not without charm, or maybe she had really begun to develop a little. From this affability there sprang up during the space of a few days a bit of amorousness, and its brief flicker enkindled Josephine completely. But the flame died as suddenly as it had burst forth, and life grew sadder and harder to bear than before. As sometimes follows such an infatuated whim, when real aversion to a person is for the moment forgotten, there arose in Alexandre a kind of revengeful loathing for Josephine which drove him quickly away from her, back into society and the company of other women. And it seems that a trifling adventure at that time grew slightly serious, as was always true of his love-affairs: he met a fashionable Creole woman, a worldly young widow, who embodied what his fancy in the days of courting the far-distant little Yeyette had imagined. He was in love, much more than ever before. People with one aim in life seem to carry within them a controlling characteristic, like a physical organ, which, following the familiar Fechner-Weber law, functions because of specific reactions: the eye responds to every sort of optical stimulation, the ear to the acoustic; and in the same way the quality that forms the very centre of one's life, like Alexandre's ambition, responds to a stimulus which produces ambitious energy.

In their new residence Alexandre very soon again had enough of their old family-circle. Garrison life, after the refined society he had enjoyed in Rome and what Paris now offered, attracted him not in the least. But he realized that at the age of twenty-three years he was only a captain, and that he must distinguish himself in some way in order to gain further advancement through his benefactors. From this very amorous affair itself came the suggestion of where this distinction might be gained. There was again war with England over the colonies, but this time it was to be carried

into the enemy's country by the new Governor of the islands; thus at least Alexandre was informed by his pretty Creole widow, who had many connexions. The Governor was even now in Paris trying to obtain the means for this tremendous undertaking. Besides, the new friend was desirous of returning to the islands for a while and wished to have Alexandre near her; she also was eager for his advancement and persuaded him to apply for the position of aide-de-camp to this Governor, who was planning such important things. Alexandre was enthusiastic; this meant all at the same time promise of rapid promotion, absence from Josephine, and nearness to his alluring Creole. On these same islands had not his father managed to obtain high station with little effort and still less danger? So Alexandre set all his widespread connexions in motion. But perhaps the sound of the name Beauharnais was not very enticing to the Governor, who well knew the history of Alexandre's predecessors; perhaps he gave up his plan of attack because of the empty State treasury and therefore dispensed with the idea of an aide-de-camp. At all events, the many enthusiastic letters of recommendation brought no result, and the hasty departure of the Governor put an end to further attempts. The idea of beginning his great career on the islands, however, had taken firm hold on Alexandre; his beloved mistress did not wish to travel without him; and at home there were endless arguments with his father and Madame Renaudin, as well as Josephine's tears, hysterical pleas, and jealous ragings. So he determined, without commission or place, to try his luck on the islands, where of course war was then in progress and where he was assured his talents would be recognized and appreciated. Such a lofty purpose was the most honourable vindication of an unlimited leave of absence. Scarcely was it obtained when Alexandre, after some last tearful palaver about the sacrifice one must make for the future, hurried away to Brest, where his mistress was waiting to set sail with him.

Josephine had tried everything that an inexperienced and passionate girl could possibly do to influence a man: reasoning, unlimited persuasion, exorcism, prayer, and rage; but his haste to get away from it all did not allow time for even the pretence of emotion. She understood nothing about people in general or about herself. She knew only that this man was her husband, that she longed to have him and keep him with her, that she had a right to him, and that despite this right he had left her. She had never done anything to harm him, had always been devoted, always ready to love him. And he — Far more unbearable than the pain of missing him was the poisoned sting of thoughts that told her of other women. In the days following Alexandre's departure, when, exhausted by the frenzy of her jealousy, she had fallen into despair, it became evident that she was again pregnant. Even though, after all that had happened, her affection for Alexandre may have been consumed in her bitter tears and helpless rebellion, yet she was a girl from the French colonies, belonged to the nobility, and had been educated in the Catholic faith; she still believed absolutely in the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage, as all her forbears had been taught and believed. Perhaps by this time she had a presentiment that marriage is not of necessity founded on love, and the hope may have been enkindled within her that this child, of whose coming she now knew, would bring Alexandre back to a realization of his duty. In this hope, so far removed from all her natural desires, she wrote to her husband and told him of her condition. The letter reached him in Brest shortly before his departure. A few hastily written lines came in reply: "I felicitate myself in the knowledge, my dear wife, that you are pregnant." These words, with the added wish that all should fare well with her, were written on the 25th of September 1782. They were the last expression of kindness which Josephine ever received in her marriage, which then had lasted not quite three years.



CHAPTER FOUR



THE END AND THE BEGINNING

In anyone who longs ardently for happiness and pleasure, painful memories never become lasting experiences. For the small joys which life always brings prevent the past from holding sway and the future from being darkened. As her grief and rebellion at Alexandre's departure gradually ebbed, Josephine did not yield herself to brooding thoughts. If the one great joy were not present, there would at least be an abiding friendly peace, in which hopes always thrive. This time her pregnancy was easier to bear. Even toward its end Josephine took long walks, gazed yearningly into the shop-windows; and it is said she consoled herself for being unable to buy some of the alluring things she saw by always carrying about with her in her purse the few bits of jewellery which were her entire treasure, and that she often held a brooch or little chain in her hand. No word came from Alexandre for a long time, but that was not surprising; arrival of mail from the islands required about two months, and besides there was war. She did not worry. Life was pleasanter in their new home; the street was wider, and more sunlight fell into the rooms, especially now that spring was coming. The child was born on the 10th of April. It was a girl and was baptized Eugénie-Hortense. Josephine was in her twentieth year.

She convalesced quickly, and something of the springtime's newly awakened joy in life was apparent in her letter to Alexandre in which she told him of the birth of their daughter.

She now began to desire society, younger people with whom she might laugh and occasionally dance a little; but just as few visitors came to the rue Saint-Charles as had formerly frequented the rue Thévenot. An occasional drive with the old Marquis, now troubled with gout, and with Madame Renaudin; her walks through half of Paris, which grew ever more and more familiar, along the quays to the gloomy Bastille, then across the beautiful Place Royale, where the trees were already in heavy foliage, and homeward through the faubourg du Temple. Again a bit of country life at Noisy-le-Grand, with the white dresses from home, and out in the little garden the hammock which Madame Renaudin had once brought along. Eugène was already creeping about in the warm grass. Josephine had her guitar restrung, practised her few little songs, and sang until Hortense interrupted her. It seemed as if for the first time since the unending sunny days on the island her blood again glowed in the warm sunshine.

Alexandre's answer arrived in July. Only the reproduction of this letter can give any conception of what broke over Josephine's spirit as the result. She had expected some expression of joy at the birth of Hortense, news of her husband's meeting with her mother, a line about the house at Trois-Ilets, the world from which she came. Instead Alexandre wrote:

“ If in the first moment of my wrath I had written to you, my pen would have scorched the paper, and in receiving all my reproaches you might have thought I had chosen a moment of bad humour or jealousy in which to write you. But it is three weeks and more since I have known, at least partially, what I now wish to impart to you. Yet despite the despair of my soul and the rage which is strangling me, I know how to keep myself under control. I can

tell you coldly that in my eyes you are the lowest of all creatures, that my residence in this region has informed me how atrociously you conducted yourself here, that I know to the most minute detail your behaviour with Monsieur de B. . . , an officer in the Martinique regiment, also the affair with Monsieur d'H. . . , who shipped aboard the *César*; that I am no longer in the dark about the way in which you sought your own gratification, or the people with whom you found the opportunity; that Brigitte was given her freedom in order to bind her to silence; that Louis, who since has died, was also taken into confidence. At last I understand the purport of your letters, and I will bring back with me one of the gifts you made here. Hence there is no longer any time to pretend; and as not even the smallest detail is unknown to me, there is but one thing left for you — playing the game openly. I do not look for repentance, since you are unfit for that. A creature who during her preparations for departure was capable of embracing her lover, even though she knew she was destined for another, has no soul and must be classed with all the other fast women of the world. That you had the boldness to take advantage of your sleeping mother and grandmother is no more astonishing than that you also knew how to deceive your father in San Domingo. I desire to grant justice by exonerating all these, for I consider you the only guilty one. You alone were capable of abusing the confidence of a whole family and thus bringing ignominy and shame upon those of whom you were unworthy. After so many misdeeds and outrageous acts what conclusion must be drawn concerning all the clouds and heavy tribulations which beset our marital state? And what will be thought of this last child that was born eight months and a few days after my return from Italy? I am forced to accept it, but I swear by the heavens shining upon me that it belongs to another, that the blood of a stranger flows through its veins. But it shall never know my shame, and I swear still further that neither in

my solicitude for its education nor in my providing for its maintenance shall it ever discover that it has adultery to thank for its existence. You will understand, however, that I must consider carefully how to prevent the same misfortune in the future. Therefore prepare to make all your arrangements: never, never again will I place myself in the position to be further deceived by you; since you are capable, if we live under the same roof, of not avoiding publicity, pray oblige me by repairing to a convent immediately upon receipt of my letter. This is my final decision, and nothing in the whole world can force me to alter it. Following my arrival in Paris I will visit you there, once only; I shall desire to confer with you and to deliver something to you. But this I repeat: no tears and no supplications! I am already armed against all your endeavours and I shall take good care to fortify myself against contemptible oaths which are as false as they are vile. Despite all the accusations about me which your violent rage will now set afloat, you understand me, madame, and you know that I am kind and of delicate feelings; I realize that in the depths of your heart you feel I am right. You will persist in lies because from your earliest youth you have accustomed yourself to falsehood; nevertheless you will be aware in your innermost soul that you are getting only what you deserve. In all probability you will not know the means I have made use of to unveil so much that is hideous, and I shall confide in only my father and your aunt. It suffices for you to know that people are quite indiscreet, all the more if they have grounds for complaints. Besides, you have written letters, and you have passed Monsieur de B. . . 's letters on to the man who succeeded him in your favour; finally you availed yourself of the Negroes, who will always talk for money. Consider now the disgrace with which you and I and also your children are covered as the divine punishment which you have deserved and which your own pity and that of all honourable souls must carry into effect upon me.

“Farewell, madame, I am writing this with a duplicate copy, and these two letters will be the last which you will ever receive from your despairing and unhappy husband.

“PS. I am starting today for San Domingo and expect to be in Paris by September or October, if my health does not sink under the hardships of the journey, together with these frightful circumstances. After this letter I no longer expect to find you in my house, and I must call the fact to your attention that you will learn to know me as a tyrant if you do not follow exactly what I have told you.”¹

Looking at the Josephine of later years, who learned the art of adjusting herself to everything that happened in life with as little pain as possible, there is a great temptation to undervalue the shock of this occurrence, and several authors have been unable to resist it. But all conclusions regarding a personality in a later period of life as compared with that of earlier years are doubtful and precarious. However Josephine may have reacted to happenings in her later life, when this first injustice fell upon her she was only twenty and had not yet exhausted her response to lesser passions (the other side of which is in reality the capacity for suffering). She had, it is true, committed a small sin, pardonable in her youth — the short, half-tender, half-sensual sport with Tercier had been no more than that. But this accusation was not concerned with it. The man who was her husband and the father of these two little children did not complain of past offences. And oh, the means which he mentioned so mysteriously and thanks to which he had found the source of his charges! Madame Renaudin and Josephine had grown up in Martinique just like the person who had instigated all this prying into the past; and they both knew what Alexandre, for all his intended mystery, ultimately did not hide: that the Negroes for a few francs or a gold

¹ This letter of Alexandre Beauharnais, as well as one written later, is translated with the greatest possible accuracy, in order to impart some conception of their style.

coin could be made to understand exactly what one wished them to say, and, not troubled by any sense of truth, to apply to the case in hand something that had been said and to embellish it with sumptuous detail. From these blacks who continually betrayed and abandoned one another and the next moment were making up their differences affectionately, who flattered their masters and at the same time did them harm wherever it was possible without danger to themselves — from these slaves Alexandre had bought the facts on the basis of which he was now deserting his wife! Would he have kept silent for a moment if he had not found virgin the bride he did not love? Then, too, were not his father and Madame Renaudin witnesses of her blameless conduct during the married life, even though he himself might wish to distrust her submission and affection, which he saw with his own eyes? This was more than jealousy and the frenzied state of a husband thirsting for honour could invent unfairly; it was cruelty coldly manufactured, an act pondered over deliberately in order to create a few claims from a decision prejudiced in advance. The Marquis and even Madame Renaudin, who always shifted cleverly and attributed Alexandre's former behaviour to Josephine's shortcomings, were now indignant, and exerted every effort on behalf of the totally distracted young wife. Of course the convent was out of the question! Beauharnais wrote his son the most emphatic letter of all his life, Madame Renaudin supplementing it with solemn protestations and entreaties; and Josephine stayed with the two of them. But when the Marquis spoke of his parental authority without conviction, and her aunt assured her that common sense and kindness of heart would soon bring the wayward husband back to reason, Josephine discovered that she no longer wished it after all. At first she day-dreamed a little of how this injustice heaped upon her would be cleared away; how Alexandre would beg for pardon and how she would forgive him generously. But such generosity was too much for even her imagination. No, these un-

reasonable accusations of her having had affairs with men whom in fact she scarcely knew, of her having committed adultery — when during all the time she had lived in Paris she had never been alone for a moment with a strange man — these malicious and vengeful charges which some evil woman must have suggested to Alexandre had to be refuted. And then everything should end!

Beyond doubt it was Alexandre's mistress who had instigated the plot and had used her local knowledge of Martinique to forge weapons, from some gossip she heard about Josephine, to attack "a marriage in every respect unworthy of Alexandre." With Alexandre himself the final determination to put an end to his marriage may have resulted from his first visit to Trois-Ilets, when he realized the kind of esteem in which the Tascher family was actually held and the value of its property. To this mortification to his social sensitiveness was soon added his annoyance at the justifiable reproaches of his parents-in-law. When later it also was evident that no more laurels were to be won from the war — now nearing its end — Alexandre, with whom the climate also did not agree, fell into a state of irritation from which his Creole friend wisely knew how to furnish an outlet. Was it not enough that this Josephine, homely, plain, and dull, and, as he now saw, of insignificant family as well, had with her amorous platitudes paralysed the flight of his ideas and by her whole personality hindered his way to success? Had she not come to him from the arms of other men and perhaps even defamed her marriage? This to him! Not love nor honour was wounded the most, but the very centre of his own being, which was the centre of the world to him: his opinion of himself. He had stooped to this creature! He! Amid such feelings of monstrous insult, every kind word he had ever given Josephine seemed like a noble deed rewarded with treachery. His growing hatred was fed by his ambition and, carefully nurtured by his mistress, increased to such violence that anyone else would have become a murderer.

But such a direct natural act was not according to his methods. He preferred rather to deliver this base creature, whom he had tried to raise to his own level, to the judgment of society, which should thrust her in shame from its midst. Hence this letter was written.

When Alexandre realized the futility of staying any longer on the islands, he decided to return home, but in view of present conditions he deemed it advisable not to travel with his mistress. She therefore took passage on an earlier ship. This separation was really not unwelcome to Alexandre, for his benevolent friend, after their joint act of vengeance toward Josephine had been finished, made it very evident that she considered Alexandre entirely her property. After her departure he became ill and was cared for most hospitably in the home of one of his acquaintances. When he began to recover, the indignation raging within him against Josephine abated a little, and in the mean time he made the young hostess his mistress.

The tension of his thirst for revenge made him forget during his passage that he was returning home from an undertaking that had been unsuccessful. On arriving at the harbour in Brest letters from his father and Madame Renaudin awaited him. He prepared himself for fresh tirades with relish. In a second letter to Josephine he expressed, exactly in the same strain as the first, his astonishment that she had not yet repaired to the convent. Then followed lines filled with extravagant self-pity over his state of health, which had been endangered by fever and pain resulting from this experience. The letter ended with the assertion that his decision was unswerving, and that any attempt to change it would be utterly useless. He would not set foot inside his house, so he wrote, until Josephine had left it, adding finally that she might choose between the convent and returning to her family.

Arriving in Paris, he did in fact take lodgings with friends, and against all the family's efforts at reconciliation he set up an impene-

trable tragic mask of deep though resigned suffering and unbending determination.

Hence Josephine was forced to leave the house, which really belonged for the most part to Alexandre. And as the convent was considered a suitable place for women of position to prepare themselves for any adjustment to altered circumstances, Madame Renaudin suggested the Abbey of Panthémont, where she herself had once awaited the outcome of her own suit for divorce. Quite a few convents of that day were adapted for receiving as residents widows and adult orphan girls, among whom, as in all crises of a social character, an ever increasing number of married women arrived who were waiting to be divorced. These buildings were the kind that serve nowadays as family pensions, sanatoriums, and similar places for transition stages in women's lives. Their regulations were enforced lightly on these transient tenants, who were only obliged to hear mass, receive the sacrament at prescribed periods, and return home by a certain time each evening. But as women of society were accustomed to submitting to such demands anyway, and as they otherwise enjoyed a freedom which Josephine had not known since her girlhood, life in the convent had none of the severe prison discipline which Alexandre had intended for Josephine. Besides, Madame Renaudin also moved into the convent in order to make the adjustment easier for her niece, whom she had begun to love more and more dearly. The solidarity of woman's interests, together with a slight feeling of guilt over her having brought about this marriage herself, caused the aunt to take the niece's part, especially since she was now convinced, after Alexandre's having foolishly assumed such a wrong position, that Josephine would emerge from the forthcoming inevitable separation suit fully reinstated and well provided for. Experienced as Madame Renaudin was, she herself soon took the first steps to institute legal proceedings for the dissolution of the marriage.

No account is available of how Josephine passed her first days at the distinguished abbey in the rue de Grenelle. It must be granted that after the decision was once reached, a feeling of relief rose ever higher and higher above her tearful lamentations and rebellious outbursts. Besides, the preparing of the defence, the necessity of appearing before celebrated lawyers as a martyr awakening pity, offered the chance of giving hatred and bitterness an objective aspect. The element of deep feeling therefore was absent from the evidence, and the worldly-wise Aunt Renaudin did not minimize the consoling promise that life would yet richly compensate her poor little niece for all the sufferings she had endured. Of course the convent might be only a passing phase; and nothing should be said of any return to Martinique. The fact that Josephine had children was a relief to Madame Renaudin, and certainly neither the Marquis nor she herself would ever forsake the young mother.

Alexandre's hope of humiliating Josephine did not fare well. The depositions of the Negroes concerning the alleged adventures in her girlhood were scarcely worthy of belief. Against these and the totally unfounded accusations of adultery Josephine set forth convincing arguments. The one carrying the greatest weight was a table giving the times when she and Alexandre had lived together and when they had been separated; it had been accurately drawn up by Josephine and her aunt. Her life with Alexandre had lasted only a few months in all, and opposed to this stood the years of his voluntary absence. Josephine's youth, the children, and finally the evidence of the family completely refuted Alexandre's charges. He might have hoped that his role as the avenger of his honour — an offence against which he considered proved by his mere assertion — would be sufficient to isolate Josephine and make her submissive to his demands. If the separation had been decreed adjudging Josephine guilty, he of course would not have forgiven her, but nevertheless he would have thrown her a few crumbs magnanimously.

Instead he saw the unbelievable happen: the whole Beauharnais kinship, which — chiefly because of the irregularity in the Marquis's household — was seldom even seen, with one voice took sides against him for this mere nothing of a Josephine, and through their testimony changed his case — safely won, as it had seemed to him — into a hopeless procedure. This did not disconcert him for a moment; he considered it merely as the malicious yelping of the banal against the great. Nevertheless he saw himself compelled through such a circumstance to give up the proud role of the defender of his honour, for no injury whatever had been proved against it. And now that the armour of his indignation was gone, it was only a step from his obstinacy to complete submission. Alexandre consented to the separation, acknowledged himself the guilty party, and allowed Josephine the right of personal freedom, as well as a yearly income which the marriage contract promised her as a widow's pension. Nothing further was said of the contested birth of Hortense. She was to remain with her mother all the time, and Eugène until he had reached the age of fifteen. After that he was to spend his summer vacations with her. If Alexandre disobeyed these orders, the discontinued lawsuit could again be resumed and a judgment be obtained against the party conceded to be guilty.

The courts moved slowly in those days. So it required two years for Alexandre to realize that the suit was no longer doubtful. Josephine had enough time to prepare herself in the comfortable convent for the freedom which she foresaw. After Madame Renaudin was convinced that Josephine was gradually bearing up under her sorrow and preparing for her new situation in life, she had returned to the Marquis. Josephine began to grow accustomed to the convent. Heretofore she had lived unguided by much serious thought and had considered unnecessary the commands of others who were opposed to her wishes and instincts. But the injustice meted out to her by Alexandre had roused her. During the investigation con-

nected with her lawsuit it began to dawn upon her that she was right, and the defence awakened her self-consciousness. Not alone Alexandre's unintelligible maxims, but his very existence and her submission to him had during her married life veiled the world around; indeed, her own little desires and longings had seemed rather like dainties pilfered from the unknown life surrounding her. For her hope in Alexandre and the constant intercourse with the Marquis and her aunt, who both long ago had considered their method of living the only possible one, had made Josephine view the world outside more as an ornament in a shop-window, or perhaps later as a handsome young man just passing by. Now, shaken out of her lethargy, she began to look around. She saw clearly that the spacious buildings of the abbey were filled with worldly occupants, engaged in eager conversation, standing on the stairs and in the corridors; and that carriages came and went unceasingly. She began to observe that there were cliques among the women, and she perceived the connexion among them even before she realized the similarity of their dress, manners, walk, and style of greeting. She herself belonged to none, but they excited her interest and greatly attracted her. There was a feeling of their being to the manner born in their constant visiting, giggling and laughter which came from behind closed doors, the fragments she caught of their unintelligible yet delightfully exciting scandal and much important discussion on the details of dress. For instance, three young women stood on the landing of a stairway; one, evidently just returned, had opened a small package and was showing some brown lace and a piece of shimmering taffeta. Josephine's heart beat and she slipped slowly by with hungry eyes. Soon she even dared to stop. She realized that people knew about her, and one woman addressed her kindly as "poor little lady"; she enjoyed being near other people. When the children were brought to her, she attracted attention when she appeared with the two of them on the walks and in the

gardens; she was gradually addressed by more and more of the women, and after a few months it was almost like being at home on the island, where one lived among crowds of people if one had grown up there and really "belonged." Josephine kept her eyes open. She watched, listened, and learned. At last she was in a school which awakened completely her craving for knowledge and her willingness to be taught. At first it was difficult to join in the conversation: she had to acquire, as the requisites of this intercourse, the language, the expressions then in vogue, all the current names of people and the knowledge of institutions and relationships. In consequence she was obliged to conquer much embarrassment and timidity; for nearly all these women walked in difficult and uncertain ways of life; they tried hard to appear frivolous and careless, as if they had never really known any sentimental affairs. Soon Josephine learned from each one of them the fragment of a life-story hidden behind such conduct, the plain hard facts, disappointment, deceit, misery, and death; all the women helped one another by smiles and clever concealment, thus completing their education in the methods of taking nothing in life seriously.

There were also some ladies from very important families residing in the convent; they confined themselves to merely a greeting or brief exchange of courtesies. As the gossip of the others centred chiefly on these distinguished women, Josephine's attention was drawn to them especially. She soon began to realize what a very incompetent teacher Aunt Renaudin had been; the poor thing really "did not belong" and had long ago lost contact with this world, where the little things eternally the same were so skilfully hidden behind forms ever quickly changing that Josephine herself could always appear amused. Whatever it was that produced a quality of repose behind the innate charm possessed by these truly great ladies Josephine questioned as little as Alexandre ever had concerning the meaning of the noble state or the feasibility of exalted

thoughts. She saw, listened, and watched; then returning to her room, she would rehearse before her mirror a nod of the head or the lifting of a fan; she would listen critically to her own speech when she imitated the cadence of this marchioness or that duchess. Her voice was flexible and pleasing, her ear quickly trained to the varied inflections; she had a sense of humour, saw readily where the slightest exaggeration might make things laughable, and understood that the aim of society education consisted, not in mastering a code of forms and phrases, but in the attainment of a confidence to which one's own nature could finally give free rein.

In this great school of the world Josephine learned other things as well. During the early years of her married life she had never understood Aunt Renaudin's constant talk about money when she tried to show her the advantages of financial security; nor later on, at the beginning of the separation suit, when the aunt spoke again and again of the money to be expected from Alexandre. Now ever oftener, in various conversations, whether hidden or greedily unconcealed, she heard always and always the word "money." So her blindness in financial matters began to fade. In her girlhood she had never felt the straitened domestic circumstances of the family; hence the all too often highly praised security of matrimony did not mean anything whatever to her. Now she heard how this or that woman fought desperately for money, and from the very tenacity of those struggles she understood the importance of that money, for the possession of it meant to all these women nothing less than their being independent — possessing carriages, jewels, and beautiful clothes. Josephine's interest in the talks her aunt had given her concerning her own financial condition grew much livelier. Not that she dreamed of being rich for the sake of that alone; but to be able to spend money, to buy, always able to buy new and lovely things, must be so grand! A Negroid thirst for ornament, glitter, and bright colours permeated her being — a heritage from

her island life — unaffected by all the newly acquired knowledge concerning a real lady's moderation and reserve. Her eagerness to learn, her determination to be fashionable, collided with a factor which in her haste to adjust herself she had overlooked — her own nature. Through all this educational process the latter said imperiously: all very well so far as it makes life more pleasant — but no further; you have had to be resigned enough. Now you must deny yourself nothing. And soon Josephine arrived at a decision which seemed to reconcile the irreconcilable, a determination to make her life good, beautiful, and amusing, and in addition to find a place in society without which one was nobody — and the possession of which must not cost too dearly. It did not even yet occur to Josephine that she might have learned much of this from Alexandre's worldly wisdom, so completely had his eloquence disguised his purpose.

After such schooling her marriage separation, with its very favourable conditions, appeared vastly different to her. She was the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais, not unlovely and not yet twenty-three years old; instead of being ignominiously expelled from society as Alexandre had intended, she could now feel assured of the sympathy which is always bestowed upon unfortunate innocence. Still inexperienced in the handling of money, she viewed her financial condition with great optimism. The yearly income which had been allotted to her, together with the additional allowance for the maintenance of her little daughter, amounted to approximately two thirds of the retirement pension, considered high, which the Marquis de Beauharnais received as Lieutenant-General. Josephine was agreeably convinced that life from the windows of her convent room — which someone else would soon be occupying — looked decidedly better than from the windows of the house in the rue Thévenot or earlier in the rue Saint-Charles.



CHAPTER FIVE



EXPERIENCING FREEDOM

Life in the cloister Panthémont had been almost too good a school. It not only had taught, but at the same time — except for the absence of men — had offered excellent opportunities for applying the knowledge acquired. It had brought into close contact all these unoccupied women, hungry as they were for social life and banished temporarily from their accustomed circles; but this passing phase of life where so many people were assembled because of various circumstances presented a false picture of society, where they lived together congenially despite the reserve and exclusiveness of a few. For men were thought of merely as a conception. Jealousy, the advancing of oneself at the cost of others, intrigues dealing with the sexual, even just the taste for the erotic — often merely spice to the woman who loves society — all such things existed here only in talk. Therefore it was a community without the danger or the poison of real society, where life is lived too close together. Josephine, an industrious pupil, came out of this school filled with illusions which made it seem entirely too easy to accomplish her new plan for living (if gratifying all one's many wishes may be called a plan). The sympathy she received at the convent, the fact that the name Beauharnais seemed to be well known, and the number of contacts she had made — all these things led her to believe

that the preliminary conditions of the life she desired to follow — that of belonging to society — had been fulfilled. The inevitable realization of her mistake was not slow in dawning upon her. That she, in fact, by origin and rank belonged to what was mentioned a thousand times a day in the abbey — “*le monde*” — was of no importance to the world outside. For since the time of Louis XIV this society of the aristocracy, bound together by common interests, no longer actually existed. He had converted privileges into names, and by breaking the resistance of the caste system which fought for its former power in the State, he had destroyed the very centre of its life. According as his will dictated, the kingdom was to become the new centre of nobility. Ever more and more he drew the noblemen into his court, gave them offices, honours, and salary; and, as one historian says, he thus returned drop by drop what he had taken away in bulk. Lit by the splendour of this King, all that had shone in beauty quickly turned to ashes during the reign of his successor. Under Louis XV the feeling of solidarity that had existed among the nobility and once had led to the Fronde was already ended. The fact that this person or that bore some family name or title was no longer a reason for honouring something within him, from which the person himself could receive honour. As, indeed, later on, titles were increasingly granted carelessly, without any real merit, the old nobility collapsed entirely. In its place coteries arose in ever increasing numbers, each one of which considered itself society, beginning with what was called the “highest society” (though this was not at all stable); they absorbed a great deal of light from the last court of the *ancien régime* and cast a heavy shadow upon it.

That Josephine’s small experience resulted in a comprehension of these conditions is quite doubtful. In lives like hers experiences are merely events which must continually be followed up by others until a certain kind of outlet becomes at last more a habit than an experience. Josephine in her eagerness to pursue the threads of life

which she had woven in Panthémont made visits to a number of the women who had returned to their accustomed social circle; there she found that Panthémont was not the world, that friendliness carried with it no obligations whatever, and finally that none of these so-called friends seemed inclined to open that door for her leading to what each one of them called society. This was not encouraging. From their inquiries concerning what she intended to do next, she gathered that it was not expected of her that she should live alone. Generally speaking, she had already understood that, whatever her gift for creating situations may have been, various things were looked for in her, and in so far as she fulfilled these expectations would her belonging to this society really be made known; but meanwhile she dared not hope for much consideration.

Where, then, should she go? Her one and only home was with Aunt Renaudin and the Marquis. Unlike the great lords who were accustomed to reside in the same houses for ever, which everybody in Paris knew, the Marquis within a few years had changed his place of residence three times. The dissolution of Alexandre's marriage had been the cause the last time, for after his separation from Josephine, Alexandre had at once insisted upon an accounting of his income separate from that of his father. He had thus accomplished exactly the thing which Madame Renaudin had planned to prevent by the consummation of the marriage. A curtailment of living-expenses therefore became absolutely necessary for the Marquis. The house in the rue Saint-Charles was vacated, and under the pretext that his health required country surroundings a residence was sought outside the capital. It was finally found in Fontainebleau, where through the occasional appearance of the court something of the grand life could still be felt. The place was very often mentioned in the tales told at Panthémont in connexion with royal hunts, court festivities, pastoral plays on the green, and all the allurements of the great world of that day; yet it never once entered Josephine's con-

sciousness, as she started on her journey, that she was beginning the road into freedom with her returning home.

The two elderly people were very anxious to recompense Josephine — though she had long ago found consolation — for all she had endured. But their efforts did not extend very far, and at first they were expressed only in promises and statements concerning the social pleasures which they believed they owed Josephine. The Marquis through his widely known connexion with Madame Renaudin had become too long estranged from that social intercourse which he averred he did not need, so he had lost all contact with his former acquaintanceship. Although age meanwhile had gradually effaced the doubtful element in his living with his mistress, and hence his house and intimate associations had become “possible,” yet at his age he could scarcely look for new contacts that were at the same time suitable; and to his old acquaintances — if they had not in the mean time died — he had become nothing but an empty name. But since there was now a young creature in the house who was deserving of the pleasures of society, social intercourse had to be resumed wherever it chanced to offer itself. Hence later, after a multitude of changes, when, in the strangest place, Josephine rediscovered her interest in the old sway of royalty, she never contradicted the statement that she had once belonged to society at court. If in connexion with this assertion the names are mentioned of those who were the guests and the hosts in the Beauharnais social life at Fontainebleau, the list sounds insignificant, and its highly esteemed mediocrity withers incongruously. After all, Josephine’s appearance in the little town, which was not especially lively when the court was absent, proved a sufficient attraction for many to seek the acquaintance of the Beauharnais. Her desire to please had begun to exercise its formative effect upon her, and the agreeable adjustment to the claims of beauty and good taste in conformity with the spirit of the age had greatly helped; thus she was

already anticipating a part of that season which nature had intended for her flowering time. All her features had become smaller and finer, so that the dark-blue eyes, which meanwhile had learned the art of telling glances, looked larger. Her figure had lost its plump and clumsy appearance. The "pretty extremities" which her father had glowingly praised in his letter of eulogy now belonged to a well-proportioned body in no way marred by motherhood, and her bosom, young, round, and firm — a part of woman which in the following years was not a thing to be concealed — already bore witness to the beauty renowned for many years to come. The very delicate fair skin — possessed by artificial blondes even more than by the real ones — over which blushes played long after they had lost their meaning, completed the gifts which Alexandre had disdained — gifts which through dress and movement Josephine now was learning how to display.

Over the freshness of these charms she alluringly spread a little coating of world-weariness, carefully prepared; this helped attract suitors for her favour, who were then quickly inflamed when Josephine, who was unable to carry any pose very long, would allow her youthful hunger for life to be divined. During this period at Fontainebleau several lovers are accredited to her, and among the names mentioned are some whose presence there at that time can be proved. However, the supposition that she had now begun to enjoy the gifts formerly so sparingly doled out to her is supported more by the knowledge of her nature and her determination to find pleasure than by real facts. There is of course one reason which may just then have forced upon her a secretiveness not at all in keeping with her later frank conduct: the fear of Alexandre, whose hatred had now become venomous rancour and to whom any pretext seemed justified that would motivate an act of wicked malice against Josephine. But even this fear would not have been enough to save her from actions which might have betrayed everything if any of these

trifling flirtations had really developed into a passion. There are instances dating from the time when she was no longer a novice (a suddenly awakened love may then of course blind the reason) and when she had much more at stake than Alexandre's wrath. Hence it is far more probable that she did not feel any of these affairs very deeply and that none of her lovers was the type to turn her head entirely (even though at that time it would not have taken very much), at least not to draw her away from what was holding her thoughts captive somewhere else.

One is tempted at this period of her history to borrow from the sentimental biographers of Josephine some of their comparisons referring to the cup of bitterness, her cold and stormy springtime, and the like; in their presentation of her they are not sparing of melancholy and mournful colouring. The splendour which Josephine had looked forward to when she left the abbey lost a little of its lovely glitter day by day. And when, in spite of the many trials of the period, we try not to take for granted that it seemed a hard time for Josephine, we think above everything else of her youth, hungry for joy and easily satisfied, and how from a little garden party with a comedy, a hunt, a passing flirtation, she could derive enough "earthly nourishment" to persuade her that all these tribulations were but incidents in her life.

Even though the aunt and the Marquis had exerted their best efforts, it had not been easy for Josephine to become accustomed to the two aged people, who no longer expected anything of the future. Rather humiliated by the present unsatisfactory associations, the Marquis, who besides may have observed from various signs the great change threatening the world, formed the habit of talking more and more depressingly in praise of the past. Matters grew worse when his attacks of gout — which he could not be persuaded to prevent through moderation in food and drink — occurred more frequently and became much more painful. Finally Madame Re-

naudin also grew seriously ill, so that in addition to caring for her two children Josephine was obliged to nurse the two elderly people as well. Even with all this, if she still had had some little freedom, it would have been of no use to her, as social life in Fontainebleau was becoming more and more scanty. Josephine, who had so little interest in affairs of state (yet who had to hear so much of what finally comes to be known as history), was now reconciled to the fact that something in this connexion had ruined for her a happy expectation. The "upstart" Necker in spite of all persecution had with bravery and common sense opened a way to bring order out of financial chaos. After he had been overthrown, his successor, Calonne, began his career in the office he had so eagerly sought by a relapse into the wildest extravagance. The Queen, ever more and more powerful, was to procure the money for him as well as more adherents. But this did not last long. All credit was exhausted, and after the brief gleam of former splendour the inevitable strict economy that followed was doubly painful. One of the demands was that the costly removals of the whole court from place to place must be stopped; and young Josephine Beauharnais, who had dreamed of wondrous festivities, of barques on the lake gaily decorated with lanterns, of making the acquaintance of all the cavaliers in the kingdom, saw every hope vanish. Of course there was occasionally some small excitement for a day or two: court carriages arriving, horses, dogs, and the horns of the piqueurs. But all that meant was being allowed to peep through the closed trellis-gate, and nothing more. After the death of Maurepas, Louis XVI, having lost his old mentor (who had been greatly in need of guidance himself), saw so many of his well-meant attempts to prove himself worthy of the difficult heritage wrecked that the weak King then turned for a stronger hold on the goodwill of the people to where a greater energy seemed to give promise — to Marie-Antoinette. He finally went so far as to gratify the sole passionate interest of his

life, the hunt; in the beginning of his reign he had denied himself this, at the time of hope and promised reform. He was already on the way, however, to becoming the dull, heavy man who in 1790 recorded in his diary nothing but the number of partridges killed, entirely omitting what had taken place in his kingdom.

Thus through the trellis-gate Josephine at times saw the King and his companion on the hunt descend the flight of stairs into that courtyard where — well, who does not think in recalling that wondrous court of honour at Fontainebleau of a great vanquished leader who there took leave of his guard?

After such a fashion Josephine had caught glimpses of the King and also the Queen. This was the part she took in the fading glow of the old kingdom, this and at times leave to join in the practice hunts before the arrival of the illustrious personages, thus renewing her skill at horsemanship acquired in her girlhood on the old Porto Rican pony.

After that she would return to the two invalids and her children; so long as this was all that oppressed her, life was still good. But soon she had to face things that were worse.

Josephine had begun her comfortable life of freedom with the acquisition of everything that was necessary for the fashionable existence which she believed lay ahead of her. It is scarcely probable that her first unrestricted purchases exceeded her income at that time. Her painful introduction to financial anxiety in the early days had far different grounds from her later familiarity with it. Josephine's comfort was conditional on an assumption of which she had never thought: namely, that the sums of money promised her would really be paid. She may have doubted that the income which her father had settled upon her after the dissolution of her marriage would be paid regularly, but she had always felt sure that Alexandre would fulfil his obligations promptly. On the contrary he seemed determined to make her realize the only power which he still could

hold over her. The chicanery, the crafty excuses for refusing payment, and the subtly devised efforts to make life difficult for Josephine call to mind the darkest pages of Strindberg — or, even more, the offices of attorneys where the poisonous seeds of unhappy marriages are planted in settlements which are definitely intended to make the other party realize that nothing whatever has been accomplished through the divorce. At first Alexandre fought every payment that fell due; when finally he was compelled to comply, no subterfuge was too low for him to bring about delay. He demanded piece by piece that furniture and household utensils be given back to him which were for the most part not even in Josephine's possession; next he insisted on having the jewels — not very costly, at that — which had been his wedding-gift to her, and even some other purchases he had made at the same time from the same jeweller, which he had never given Josephine at all.

As for Alexandre himself, he was leading at that very time a most extravagant life, the splendour of which, however, did not benefit his pretty friend from Martinique; she had meanwhile left him, and others had taken her place. It is not known which one of the many beauties who during that period provided rest and food for his aimless aspirations was the mother of Alexandre's child that was born in utter secrecy. It need only be stated here that Josephine not only was aware of this girl's existence, but later befriended her. Yet while Alexandre, with all sorts of merry pastimes, was thus making his own life easy in the service of his ideas and his country (a little later he greatly prided himself on this), affairs grew worse and worse for Josephine. There are not many secrets in her life. The only real one, which has remained for ever impenetrable, is locked up in the time when the completely unforeseen end of her stay in Fontainebleau took place. It was in the early summer of 1788 when Josephine, regardless of the fact that her aunt had scarcely recovered from a serious illness and that her son Eugène had just been brought

to spend the summer months with her, left Fontainebleau as if in flight; taking Hortense with her, she hurried to Le Havre and there embarked for Martinique.

There are several conjectures concerning the reason for this, but none seem adequate. However great the need of money may have been, shelter was afforded her in the home of the Marquis; from all the replies she had received following her requests for money, Josephine very well knew that the condition of financial matters was no better at home in Trois-Ilets. It has also been suggested that Josephine took flight precipitately upon the discovery that she was pregnant — a condition which is said to have ended on shipboard through a miscarriage. This does not sound any more probable, although there has been an attempt to attribute her sterility in later life to this alleged abortion. Had she been pregnant, she would surely have preferred, with the help of Aunt Renaudin, to have hidden somewhere in France and have brought the child into the world, like the unknown mistress of Alexandre, rather than to have returned into the narrow sphere of life on the island, where certainly nothing could long remain concealed. Fear of her creditors has been mentioned, terror at a threat which Alexandre made when he discovered one of her little sins. But none of these explanations seem sufficient reason for her so suddenly leaving France, “the only land on earth where life is really living,” and which thus far had kept so few of the many promises it had made to her.

At Le Havre she did not even wait for the arrival of the big passenger boat which warranted a safe voyage; instead she went hurriedly aboard the first miserable merchant vessel whose destination was the Antilles, as if she felt safe only on shipboard. The wretched craft to which in her haste Josephine entrusted her own life and that of her child required several months for this journey away from the “breath of hope” and toward a cheerless goal. A storm arose which drove it off its course for many days. When fear had passed and

physical distress had been quieted, France was far away. Josephine sailed on a summer sea to that remote spot on the earth which she had left nine years before with the glimmer of a Columbus dream — for ever present in youth when it begins to travel. She had been a wife, had borne two children, had suffered humiliation, had snatched a little sensual happiness, had learned that money was sorely needed in the world of her day, and had spied through its trellis-gate. Now she was returning to the Tascher homestead, taking with her a few pretty dresses, a few current manners and phrases of speech, and so great an expectation that it seemed as if life had not yet begun.

BOOK TWO

THE CHANGING OF
A WORLD





CHAPTER ONE



A VARIETY OF EVENTS

When Josephine left France, the prologue to the great tragedy in which she was destined to enact a most unexpected role had already been played, but she had noticed little of it. To be sure, she had observed a change in the trend of conversation — a “situation” existed about which there was much discussion. It was said there were meetings of the nobles at Versailles (apparently an unusual affair to cause this comment); rumours were circulated that Calonne had been overthrown and that an archbishop, Brienne, had assumed the administration of finances; finally the irritable old Marquis de Beauharnais insisted that the nobles were ineffectual and powerless and that most drastic reforms would need to be tried. It was then that Josephine heard for the first time the words “*États Généraux*,” a term she understood quite as little as most of the women of her time and position — or as much as the majority of women of the “better classes” knew before 1914 when they read headlines in the newspapers such as “Change of Cabinet,” “Crisis,” and the like. But to lament over the times was then decidedly the custom, and this attitude of mind Josephine took with her to Martinique along with her other acquired fashions. She had, however, not sufficiently “belonged” to comprehend the uneasiness of actual society — an uneasiness which dissipated the sweet lost comfort and leisure of

the eighteenth century and made restlessness general — a restlessness which rose from the bottom upwards, with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the first of the “philosophes,” whose teachings tempted one to a lovely playing with ideas, yet really enforced stoutly and ponderously the challenge to draw forth consequences from these thoughts.

Josephine’s biographers have tried to make a moralizing phantom out of this human being so unsuited to it and have boldly asserted that she could not have expected anything from the reunion with her family. Yet on her long sea-voyage she was in fact more than ever disposed to think of France as the very centre of her life. She experienced precisely what Chateaubriand expressed in his memoirs: that by the measure of homesickness felt, one may conclude how far away one is from Paris, the heart of the world.

The cosy happiness of family life so highly praised in Hortense’s memoirs was in reality entirely as Josephine had foreseen it. Instead of the Marquis and Aunt Renaudin she had two other invalids to care for: her father and her remaining sister, Manette, whom she found slowly dying of a hopeless disease. And the sympathy which she had hoped to receive from her mother was probably far from what she had expected, for Madame de la Pagerie, with her own unfortunate marriage in mind, was of the opinion that Josephine, whose circumstances had been so very much better than her own, should never have allowed the dissolution of her marriage to Alexandre. The fact that Hortense was with her was Josephine’s one great comfort. When she introduced her lively child into the fairy world of Negroes, unfamiliar animals, and wonderful tropic growth, much of her own forgotten childhood rose vividly before her. In guiding Hortense about, many things which formerly she had taken as a matter of course now appeared new and fresh to her; and however strong her homesickness for France and her dislike of this senseless waste of time on the island may have been, nevertheless new images

of many exotic flowers and fruits, which before she had thought of merely as weeds, were vividly impressed upon her mind. She drank in abundantly the lovely warmth of the air, and the island, which she was never to see again, took greater and greater hold of her blood, so that she actually became a Creole — the Creole Alexandre had never been able to find in her. It grew more difficult when the rainy season set in, when the waterfalls roared about the house, which was increasingly less habitable, and visiting became quite impossible. For besides her sick father and Manette, Josephine had only her cheerless mother and Hortense, who by night and day came running to her for protection from the constant, frightful thunder-storms. The great event was the arrival of the ships, at infrequent intervals, bringing the mail from France. Aunt Renaudin wrote that since Josephine's departure Alexandre had remitted her income to Fontainebleau regularly and with no objections (was her absence of such consequence to him?). And in addition to that, the news of Alexandre's own affairs was more and more unbelievable.

If Josephine, at the time of her first love for Alexandre, when there existed only her credulous attachment, had been told that he had suddenly been made King of France, she would have doubted it far less than the news that now reached her concerning him, which was so at variance with her own opinion — the first judgment she had formed. But any comparison was entirely impossible, for the whole enticing world of men was barred from her with an impenetrable secrecy. Then, too, she had always held the belief which connects success and righteousness, with the logic of a fairy-tale — and the remnant of that belief was still strong within her. Alexandre was not good, she knew that. How, then, could all these messages that came from France be true: that he had become an important man, that he had risen in esteem from day to day, that his name was mentioned oftener and oftener among the recognized leaders of the new movement? She knew as little as all the others

around her of what indeed this movement was; but she distrusted the whole affair because an untruthful man like Alexandre was become aggrandized through it. She bore Alexandre no malice; in fact, she saw nothing to be condemned in lying. Rather what she meant by untruthful had its first root in nature, which had become her own first demand. But this movement — it was difficult even to describe it — must be of importance; for every ship from France brought news that was full of it; and even on the island men now sat together discussing it instead of playing cards as they used to do. Among the Negroes, too, there was something unusual arising, a slight hesitation before obeying, a suggestion of insubordination, a lurking hint of hostility in their eyes. In any case it was something as uneasy and alarming as the news that the King no longer was in absolute power. Finally Josephine herself shared the feeling of apprehension and restlessness; but it was not because she reacted to the sentiments of those around her or questioned what might happen to the world from the shock of a great rearrangement of the classes of society; rather did she have the simple fear that all this uncertainty and lack of balance would rob her of her portion of those joys which the future certainly owed her.

Alexandre a general! Alexandre in the National Assembly! What merit did he possess? Probably the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, free-thinker, philosopher, and dreamer, who would never miss a thing like this, had bestowed his patronage on him. (And indeed that was true: Alexandre had got his place in the Revolution through influence, exactly as his father before him had obtained his own very different position.) When the news of his rise in power was no longer to be doubted, Josephine realized that it was to her own advantage. Her relations with Alexandre were now at least quite tolerable; he even wrote her occasionally about Eugène; they would of course continue to live apart, but now it was certainly a satisfaction to bear his name, even though in a different way from

formerly. Certainly she did not realize that what she thought of as “formerly” had already begun to be much like what we speak of as “before the war”; but even the remote influence upon the life of the island left her no longer in any doubt that something very important was taking place. Josephine’s homesickness for France developed into the restless fear that she was missing great decisive events. But a motive for her departure could not yet be found, or perhaps she had not yet been gone long enough from what had driven her away. It is also possible that she lacked money or means of passage. At all events, she remained in Martinique as one banished, awaiting the call home; so almost two years passed before the magic summons — yes, the command — to depart reached her.

The hostility of the Negroes was becoming more systematized through all the islands, and finally the first mutinies arose — small illustrations of the frightful general uprising which occurred later on. Threatening orders on the part of the insurrectionists that the small squadron lying before Port Royal should not put out to sea stirred the commandant of the fleet to a hurried departure for home. Among the few to whom he offered passage were Josephine and her child. This embarkation had to be accomplished in even greater haste than the one from Fontainebleau. All her luggage was left behind; there was no time even for saying good-bye to her family (her father and sister died not long afterwards and Josephine never saw her mother again). Her departing from France had begun in a storm; the return home, with the squadron’s being bombarded from the forts, poorly aimed shots by untrained gunners — the first cannonading that Josephine had heard.



CHAPTER TWO



BEGINNING TO LEARN A NEW

In November 1790 Josephine landed with little Hortense on the shores of France, which she had left in June 1788. The weather was again wet and cold, just as it had been when she first arrived many years before. This time her chief discomfort was the fact that her own and Hortense's wardrobe consisted of only a few dresses and a scanty supply of linen which she had borrowed on shipboard and altered and which all in all made a very lean collection of travelling luggage for the trip by mail-coach to Paris. She was barely able to keep warm, and her child clung close to her, wrapped in a cloak. Josephine listened to every word of the conversation in which her fellow passengers were engaged; she asked questions, did not quite understand, listened again, and gradually came to realize the excitement to which France had meanwhile accustomed herself.

When Josephine had gone away, the Convention of the *Etats Généraux* promised by the King within the next five years had been a matter of importance only for those who followed politics as a vocation or a fancy. But now the Convention had been called and was long ago adjourned, had accomplished its monstrous rearrangement, and had become the National Assembly, the brains and heart of the nation. The rebellion had swept away the Bastille, and on the

first anniversary of its fall delegates from all over France had danced in the ruins; and for the first time in generations the tocsins had rung out over Paris. Josephine did not know, even now, that the first, the great Revolution had ended, and that the second, the smaller, had begun sixteen months later; she did not know who this Camille Desmoulins and the other men were whose names she heard her fellow travellers use as if they were names that had always been common. For two great years, the like of which are seldom known in centuries, she had lived on the last edge of the world. And now she came back still believing in that concept of society which she had learned at the Abbey of Panthémont, and still determined to spend her life in the company of gay, pleasure-seeking people — but already in the post-chaise she began to discover, from relay to relay, that she had got into a world unintelligibly altered. Even at the time when, as an uncomprehending little girl from the colonies, she had listened to the talk in the rue Thévenot, she had not felt so ignorant as now, when in the coach she heard all this conversation of events and names which were unfamiliar only to herself. Into the being of a man, however stubbornly averse his nature may be to the acceptance of mere abstract political movement in either State or society, there enters, nevertheless, the result of any change, its physical fragments — indeed, the very breath of its life. Each man is perforce part of the change, or, if you wish, the change is forced on each one singly. Josephine was like a pupil who had left his studies at the beginning of Latin declension and who, returning, finds his fellow students in the midst of the Gallic war, or like a German who, hidden for years deep in a forest, had heard whisperings of a war and then was suddenly transplanted into the Berlin of 1920, where even the beggars calculated in millions. But Josephine was still fresh and young; she was only twenty-seven, and her greed for life inevitably produced an eagerness for knowledge. When the mail-coach drew near Paris and she caught through its

windows her first glimpse of the national guards with their red, white, and blue cockades, a new feeling of excitement and adventure had already become stronger within her than anxiety.

Above everything else she wanted to remain in Paris, to look around, to find out what had happened. Then, too, she had to fit out both herself and Hortense; they had arrived like gypsies, the little girl still wearing the clumsy shoes of a cabin-boy. Fortunately Aunt Renaudin had accumulated a little money for her, so she went to a hotel where she remembered travellers of rank had been accustomed to stop in her day. (It is likely that Madame Renaudin came to Paris herself with the money and took Hortense away, first to see her father and then back to Fontainebleau.) Thus Josephine was left in the new, incomprehensible world, but not exactly alone, for it appears that a handsome and imposing gentleman, a fellow islander, with whom she had become acquainted either before or during the voyage, had taken momentary hold on her feelings, and — himself a traveller who had to accustom himself to this monstrously changed France — made considerable effort to assist her in an understanding of the upheaval. Perhaps it was he who established her at the house of her sister-in-law, the Marquise de Beauharnais, who recently had been separated from her husband, Alexandre's brother. At any rate, it was here that Josephine found refuge, and her new friend took lodging at a neighbouring house which also belonged to the Marquise.

The hospitality of her sister-in-law proved of great advantage, mainly in that it afforded Josephine the opportunity to make varied and influential acquaintances. The young Marquise was the daughter of the famous Fanny Beauharnais, a gifted versifier of the times whose pen was noted for its complete lack of restraint. This lady, of bourgeois stock, had brought to her marriage, along with an enormous fortune, a violent ambition; she was decidedly pretty and completely thoughtless, and delighted at every resounding name.

She wrote sentimental novels of naïvely refined shamelessness, and ornamented her little lewd literary flames, which had flickered through too many years, with sly mythological glorifications and similar lyrical accusations of obvious contemporaries. She naturally knew all the world, and little as the daughter may have had in common with her, the young Marquise nevertheless made use of her mother's manifold connexions. The reason she now befriended her sister-in-law was the similarity of their positions in life, as well as the resentment she felt against her cousins: the reactionary François, her husband, and the conceited Alexandre, who had incidentally become a most violent political opponent of his brother. So Josephine saw many people, and although her vivacity had not yet granted her ease in intercourse, she was wise enough to sit quietly by, listening and observing. She is described by a man who met her at that time as one of the inconspicuous little ladies who could be seen in any drawing-room. Probably in her manners she was less sure of herself than the greater part of these women (although there were ladies in aristocratic drawing-rooms just then whose presence would have been socially impossible two years before), and certainly all the ones with whom she now mingled were much further advanced in their knowledge of conditions than she. But this did not last long.

Josephine was beautiful proof of the maxim that men take an interest in affairs, women in people. With the whole force of her understanding she was bent on grasping "the times" as she came in contact with them, and through people she discovered that part of the general change which had become personal. Here she had an advantage over the women of the old régime, for each of them had spent her lifetime in the practice of a society which Josephine knew only as theory and principle (and it can now easily be conjectured how strictly a nature such as hers would adhere to theory and principle). These others had seen actual facts and experiments, be-

fore the inferences had been pronounced theories (just as one imparts natural history to a child, first with a graphic presentation of phenomena, then a logical derivation of laws). Josephine, on the contrary, knew the laws and the theories, but they were unsupported by instances — and now she came into the laboratory, where her experiments disguised and concealed from her the anticipated result, and where, corrected in the most surprising way, examples of the instruction she had received in the convent of Panthémont were presented to her. Over the entirely unexpected news of the storming of the Bastille, Louis XVI exclaimed: “ This is rebellion! ” whereupon the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt replied: “ No, Your Majesty, this is revolution.” Although not a few of the men that Josephine now met had brought about this revolution and expected to lead it, society as a whole preferred to view the events as fragmentary, isolated facts, which could be either admitted or denied; almost no one realized the fateful entirety and cohesion of the movement. Thus every day Josephine learned details (if the word “ learn ” may be applied here) which took root and grew, making her one of the numerous component parts of the Revolution — one of those small fragments of raw material in which any cataclysm of mankind finds its consummation and, inevitably, its fate.

It was painful to Josephine that she was no longer a Vicomtesse, but simply Citizeness Beauharnais. The fact that the abolition of privilege had been preceded by that night of August 4, and that the truly magnanimous (and others who had been carried along) had voluntarily renounced their rank, meant far less to Josephine than the loss of the pretty title for which she had paid with an unhappy marriage. The nationalization of church property was to her, as to others, no more than a favourite topic of conversation; and the standing of the assignat which had resulted from it was as yet, since purchases could still be made, not a problem. But problems did not arise in what might be called this spiritual transposition,

the naïve realism took whatever form the world offered; if some things were disturbing or annoying, others made up for them by their absurdity. And if from all this a reasonable degree of pleasure could still be had, one could get on even with a revolution. Heaven knows, Josephine had no absolute demands. When political debates came up (and the frequency of these was one of the innovations of the new society), when a member of the conservatives stormed against the change of order, her reaction was thus: if such things suit the great — Noailles, La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, and the others — and if the King himself allows the red, white, and blue cockade to be pinned on his coat, why, after all, should it not suit everybody?

Most of the ladies whom Josephine met at the home of her sister-in-law invited her to see them; for she was still the wife of that brilliant young Beauharnais who spoke so well in the National Assembly, and in their drawing-rooms “ nice ” women were necessary as background for the political glories — well-mannered, passably pretty women, who did not assume an air of importance. She went about a great deal and became acquainted with the great of every situation and rank; and, better still, she heard them talk. At this time the formation of factions in the National Assembly had already begun, but one could still meet the adherents of the Right as well as of the Left in the same house; fighting conservatives such as the Abbé Maury and the moderate Clermont-Tonnerre still mingled with the so-called “ Triumvirs,” the radicals of the Left, which at that time was known as the National Party. It was especially characteristic of the time that Duport, a lawyer of the middle classes, Barnave, a counsellor of the bureaucratic nobility, and Alexandre Lameth, a great nobleman who stood close to the court, should join forces in promoting the general welfare.

Suddenly one day Josephine stood face to face with Alexandre Beauharnais. Alexandre was polite, even friendly; his success en-

grossed him completely. As Josephine had been invited without his having had anything to do with it, and as her appearance no longer injured his sensibilities, he was even pleased to see her and, in the mask of the troubled politician who had to bear heavy responsibility, to display to her all he could of his new glamour. Josephine enjoyed intensely the pleasure of going out; she accepted every invitation, and if she learned that people had met in any of the houses of her friends and she had not been invited, she felt she had missed something important. In this way she met Alexandre frequently; when he had delivered a well-accepted speech, he did not neglect to show himself in the drawing-rooms to receive congratulations. To Josephine he spoke often about the children, never failing to insist on their education as citizens (that was a present religion) and to mention, as an example, his own hard road in the service of humanity. To be sure, her sense of humour rose against this, but something restrained her from using it; she found it hard to judge attainments accurately, as it was better to measure them, she decided, by their success. And that Alexandre was successful there was no doubt. When the rumours of his political rise had first reached Trois-Ilets, he had been named among the celebrated men of his day who had spoken most daringly. In the oft written history of the first Revolution, there is, however, little mention of him. It was only after the powerful tribune of the great period of the Revolution, Mirabeau, had died, and the standards began to change, that Alexandre Beauharnais became prominent. In the years before, he had constantly kept his eyes open, had learned the value of returning fact for rhetoric, and had cleverly trained his aptitude for improvisation until he seemed to have developed himself a character. In the early part of the year 1791 his truly unusual gift of oratory and his instinct of the actor for the right moment had made him one of the best speakers of the Assembly, which was then form-

ing the Constitution (and which was filled, after all, with so many characters and convictions), but it was a surprise even to his friends when in June that Assembly made him its president. This election was a hard blow to Josephine's opinion of Alexandre. She knew, of course, that she did not wish to live with him, but her former notion of his character became shadowy when the event occurred that made the president of the National Assembly, which Alexandre had been for a few days, a man of importance and power.

In late spring she had left Paris (the ladies who had acted as her social props having closed their drawing-rooms for the season) and had gone to Fontainebleau to her aunt and the Marquis, in order that she might pass the summer with her children. On the morning of the 21st of June (that day of solstice, when the spring of the Revolution ended) the news was on its way in every direction in France that the royal family had secretly fled during the night. This event made Alexandre for a short space an important man in the State and changed with one blow the new countenance of France — still optimistic in spite of everything. To the news of the emigration *en masse* of the nobles hostile to the Revolution, and of the flight of the brothers of the King, to the threat of the growing counter-movement of the clergy, and, finally, to the unfriendly attitude of the European powers against a France which was freeing herself, the guarantee had always been held out that the nation was attaining its freedom *with* a king. In spite of the attitude of the court, and the small coercive measures that had to be applied to the King, there had always been confidence in Louis XVI; if anything seemed to be lacking, it had been only necessary to say: "He is here, in our midst." Now this guarantee was gone. In this book such occurrences, however important they may have been, can be mentioned merely for the momentous background they provide for Josephine and those connected with her. Thus the flight and

forced return of the royal family are here set down only because they were responsible for the greatest period in the life of Alexandre Beauharnais.

From the éclat which this brief interval of dictatorial power lent to Alexandre, there shone a little halo on his family. In Fontainebleau in those days, when everybody in France knew the name of Beauharnais, and little Eugène was called the Dauphin, Josephine's acquaintance was sought by everyone who desired to bring fading rank and old names to the youthful fountain of newly arrived power. She thoroughly enjoyed being sought after by those who before had scarcely noticed her, just as Alexandre delighted in his thundering accusations of the royal family, which, besides all its other faults, had formerly taken no cognizance of the existence of Alexandre Beauharnais. In those swift days of power, when he was working ceaselessly under enormous tension, and trading heavily on his gift for pathos, Alexandre was certain he had won the unending recognition of the nation. His name did become generally known, so well known, in fact, that all his future activities were somehow connected with that early promise. But promise is not a merit that obtains in revolution. There laurels fade pitifully fast, and he who would rest on them is no longer a revolutionist. And since revolution, as someone has said, is wont to eat her own children, why, then, should she spare an intruder?



CHAPTER THREE



THE AGONIZING END OF COMFORT

The longing for the past which we experience in listening to a quartet by Haydn, a suite by Rameau, or a ballet by Lulli is simply an indication of the incessant hunger of the human mind for idyllic life; but the melancholy phrases which sing and shine from the music we may take as glorified regret on the part of the composer for a passing in his own time of the accustomed comfort, safety, and happiness. Of course, how much general happiness there ever really was in the world we shall never discover from history (since, as Michelet says, history records the death of a man, not his life); indeed, we may conclude that the degree of the world's happiness varies in direct contrast to the importance of the history. But an artist is bound to reflect the feeling of his time: a few persons and performances bear witness to the idyllic-heroic civilization on whose resplendence the eighteenth century fed. A person like Madame de Sévigné may have been an extraordinary incident, but such a happy incident as she must surely have had some basis; it is impossible to think of a Sévigné fifty years later. We cannot inquire here how dearly the helots had to pay for the success of this eighteenth-century society, helots who stand out like the slaves of Michelangelo against the smooth, hard harmony of the back-

ground; we cannot here inquire, for we are in the midst of the answer, and the slaves are now the creditors, and will not let themselves be put off. The old society tried — as do all such — in continuous refinement through the centuries, to remove the poisons from human associations, to create an ideal, and out of it to cast a dogma. Honour (that is, the honour of power in the ruling classes, as Montesquieu says) and religion served as strong cohesive balm on the harsh demands of this society — demands whose actual and avowed purpose was the defence of the life-cycle, won from all the chthonic powers, against incursions of an irrational world. The reward for the incessant discipline and self-control was that for which all projects in society, either high or low, finally reach out: comfort, coarse or refined, according to the requirements and gifts of the time and the sphere.

In the previous chapter the growing uneasiness was noted as a symptom of dissolution. Before that, in the explicit behaviour of the Beauharnais, father and son, the meaning of honour to the average nobleman of the second half of the eighteenth century was illustrated. To this may be added, as a final citation of decay, the attitude toward religion, which had always been, along with honour (as mentioned above) one of the great binding powers of society. When we see that Madame de Sévigné, who at heart was a pagan, was almost tragically concerned over her inability to experience the true religion, the inspiration, the fervour which as a member of the Christian community she thought was demanded of her, it is easy to comprehend how completely separated heaven and earth could become to the average, unintellectual woman, personified by Josephine. When the attainments which had been society's guarantee ceased, the rewards became ever poorer. And upon discontent followed unrest, as with a creature preparing for death. To be sure, small remnants of the old "comfort" were still preserved on some country estates; there was a frantic pretence to ignore the change

in a number of drawing-rooms (warmth remains, even after the sun has disappeared, in pools where its reflection has been cast); these fragments were lovingly guarded by the ignorant and the purposely blind, until hungry hands reached out for them.

Josephine, although long afterwards it was said of her that she had been one of the ladies in the court of Marie-Antoinette, was actually indebted for her first social success to the circumstance that Alexandre, after the flight and capture of the King and Queen, roared and thundered his wrath at them from the tribune. When, years later, in the new conglomeration of cliques, it had again become fashionable to be friendly to the Bourbons, Josephine quietly forgot that she had once made good use of Alexandre's "*In tyrannos*" eloquence, and was convinced that she had always been a sincere adherent of the royal house. But first she enjoyed as well as she could her place in the new hybrid world, where sincere and forthright men fought for a complete change in human relationship, and the others extolled and imitated them, never once noticing that they were thus assisting in the destruction of the edifice to whose permanence they owed their very lives.

When Josephine returned to Paris in the autumn of 1791, she moved into a rented house in the rue Saint-Dominique, near the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas. Of these quarters, which made modest demands on both rent and upkeep, her embellishing biographers have made a veritable palace of brilliant drawing-rooms, a centre of society; indeed, in one recent monograph there is even the assertion that Josephine's receptions contributed their part to the rise of Alexandre Beauharnais. Aside from the fact that the physical circumstance of the house itself and her own diminished income (her father had died leaving nothing but debts behind) prohibited such entertainment, Alexandre had, at the time of her return to Paris, already stepped down from his high pedestal. After

the end of his presidency he remained, during the few weeks of the concluding deliberations on the short-lived Constitution, simply one of the many members of the Assembly, until the latter, having completed its task, dissolved in September. But as the deputies of the Constituent Assembly had excluded themselves from re-elections to the Legislative body, Alexandre in October 1791 was only one of the former presidents of that first Assembly. This, however, helped him to obtain an insignificant office in the management of the province in which the Beauharnais estates were located. When, after considerable hesitation (a Beauharnais characteristic) he finally departed to take up his duties, he became, for the duration of his office, once more the Vicomte and concerned himself, above everything else, in the advantageous acquisition of the national estates which bordered on his own possessions. How he shortly thereafter began to tire even of such activity and, yearning for other endeavours, made the most foolish and disastrous mistake of his life will soon be told.

Although Josephine in no wise, as has often been said, vied with Madame Roland, or possessed even one of the most popular drawing-rooms in Paris, she did nevertheless now partake in an abundant share of that remnant of what we have called comfort (the word already had a ghostly sound). She made the acquaintance of a brother and sister, members of high German nobility, who had settled permanently in Paris and who had been important at court until the brother, Prince Salm-Kyrburg, had gone over to the Left, even entering the National Guard. He and his sister, Princess Amalia von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, were Josephine's first really sincere friends; with all their power they helped this young woman whom they considered so alluringly French; they opened to her their magnificent, cheerful house (which later became the Palace of the Legion of Honour) so long as they themselves had permanent residence there. This friendship was to Josephine what

the friendship of the La Rochefoucaulds had been to Alexandre; only it was now 1791 and 1792, and upon the countenance of the noble antique form of the Revolution, as these great lords had cultivated it in their salons, there had come a few earthly blemishes, traces of the increasing evidence of the masses. No matter what the power of the leaders of the Gironde (the Legislative Assembly had been succeeded by the Convention), they could not drown out the dark rumbling which came as if from the earth itself and which penetrated into house and heart alike. It was Prince Salm-Kyrburg, who, despite his belief in the Revolution, induced Josephine to entrust her children to his sister. This lady was to keep them with her on a distant country estate until an opportunity presented itself to take them to England. When Alexandre learned of their departure, he peremptorily ordered their return. His brother had emigrated, and served under Condé; that was enough. Eugène he immediately put into the newly formed Collège Nationale; Hortense was to remain with her mother or at Fontainebleau.

Among the other friends Josephine now made, one was of especial importance: Madame Hosten, a young Creole widow. To this merry and sociable island woman she was indebted for introductions to many people who were, at that time, already more significant than even princes or those popular at court. Madame Hosten had a house at Croissy, where Josephine was frequently a guest, and where she met, besides her countrymen and the local aristocracy (among whom was the family Vergennes, whose daughter later became Madame de Rémusat and recorded in her memoirs the many years she had spent near Josephine), several men who had apparently not existed yesterday, but whom smart ladies, out of both curiosity and a feeling of satisfaction at their own harmony with the times, now invited to them and about whom they whispered to each other: He (or he) may be useful. How useful, indeed, they would be, the ladies did not at all foresee, and for the present

neither did the men themselves; they still had to make an effort not to consider admission to such houses an honour, and they came to enjoy from closer proximity the pleasant atmosphere of smartness and wealth. There was, for instance, the good-looking man who, people said, was the son of a doorkeeper (or was it a servant of the Marquis de Bercy?) — a man who had begun as a small writer, then a printer's apprentice, who had spent many years at no mentionable calling, loafing about with bad women, but who now (his name was Tallien) published a revolutionary newspaper and was considered one of the coming men. He frequently sat in the drawing-room at Croissy, chatting with the pretty women and listening to Josephine strum upon the harp (a harp was so much more in tune with the times than a guitar). He had been introduced by Réal, who, like himself, deemed the Revolution, which had raised him from darkness, as hardly begun, and who had early foreseen the important role of the Paris Commune, in which he held office.

Thus Josephine had intercourse with the old world and the new, to both of which, until now, she had been almost an outsider. After her return from Martinique she had digested as a matter of course the achievements of the first revolutionary epoch and had accustomed herself to them. Altogether she had little to complain of; the disorder of the new times did not annoy her, for because of it she saw more of the old society than ever before; and with that stratum (the middle and lower classes) which was now manager and profiteer of the Revolution, which had begun higher up, she could get on quite tolerably. Josephine was now in her thirtieth year, and just as the great depreciation and destruction of life began, nature opened in her its most beautiful period of bloom, as if to protect this particular human being with all possible charm, in order to make it last. Until now Josephine had found, as either a former Vicomtesse, a defenceless woman, or the wife of Alexandre

Beauharnais, position and help; she had had security with the old people at Fontainebleau or among her new friends such as the Salms and Madame Hosten. But lava gushing forth from the depths, however slowly it may run, passes over security and position and flows on as long as it can hold out against the cooling air. If in 1789 the first movement that resembled the old earth showed itself only quickly to coagulate and congeal, the burning stream of 1792 rushed hissing over the heretofore sluggish course.

But at this point the historical aspect of the Revolution must be ignored and the event interpreted in the simplest way — that is, as a contemporary might have experienced it, a contemporary who could have felt a relation in the world-shaking events to the feeling of having been caught in a terrific storm. If one looks at the Revolution from Josephine's view-point (since no political notion ever changed her basic human belief that *living* was the highest of accomplishments), it can easily be seen that as long as she could simply live and enjoy herself a little, the momentous events disturbed her almost not at all. But in the year 1792 everything changed. Before that the chief concerns had been the State and its order, the levelling of society, and the new rights for subjects who had become citizens. But now war threatened France; it was necessary to come to the defence of the nation as well as of the new freedom. Nevertheless, in the old fire of battle, the revolutionary flame burned brighter than ever, reached out for every withering thing, and hissed at each hidden corner. And as revolution spread and became general, and her defence was the only aim, she dealt not only with the new pact of the State, but with secret feelings of the heart, and finally with the beating hearts themselves.

The name of Alexandre Beauharnais was of the greatest assistance to Josephine during the time when he was making the worst, the most fateful, error of his life. When, tired of his profitable and

pleasant existence in the protecting shade of the province, he began to long for new glamour and esteem, he allowed himself to be driven where even the slightest comprehension of his own limitations and abilities as well as of the changed necessities of the times should have kept him away. He reported for service in the army and was commissioned a lieutenant colonel. After he had received his appointment, he allowed — as had his father — months to pass before he departed for his post. On the way, even the smallest Jacobin club where he could deliver a speech offered a welcome excuse for him to interrupt his journey. His military career was finally begun as witness to a defeat of the revolutionary army. On this engagement Alexandre composed an exhaustive report. Other reports, articles, and brochures followed, and with their composition and with speeches before every available audience he occupied the first months of his service. He had luck: that contingent of the army to whose staff he belonged did not, at this time of threatening defeats to the Revolution, take part in any decisive battles. But his incessant reports on the situation to the Minister of War and the National Assembly reminded them so sensibly of Alexandre's meritorious existence that he advanced more rapidly than if he had engaged in the most important exploits. Thus in a few months he had written and talked himself into the rank of general, had become president (this title he could not deny himself) of several Jacobin clubs, and had found a charming young mistress who was honestly convinced that he possessed and practised those soldierly virtues which it was so easy to believe he had. And when, in the summer of 1792, that other revolution began and the French forces suffered defeat after defeat, he remained safely in Strasbourg and rose from the position of chief of the general staff to commander of a division and finally to the very head of the army — rose without a single genuine performance into a security which, in those times, was less and less justifiable.

Alexandre's printed reports and proclamations, which appeared in the *Moniteur* and in the official gazette of the Commune and which caused the public to give increasing weight to his views, were, in the late summer of 1792, of much use to Josephine. The insurrection of August 10 (commonly dated the 14th of July) had swept away the kingdom, and events had become no longer "politics" which could be ignored, but dismal realities. The blood of the slaughtered priests and aristocrats (Alexandre's patron La Rochefoucauld and many of Josephine's acquaintances disappeared into nameless graves) smelled horribly real, and the continuing play foretold unthinkable destruction, not of enemies, but simply of personages. What, in God's name, was to be done? In the end, would a man be judged solely as to how he looked, no matter how he tried to "adjust himself to the times"? It seemed so; and if there was still need of pretty dresses, a few flowers, touching music, and a person with whom to share the little charms of life — all that must be arranged secretly. Wherever people met, there was talk of the dead, of new prisoners; icy fingers for ever touched the heart. Out of this horror grew sympathy, a desire to help. As long as Alexandre's revolutionary ambition made the world forget his noble origin (as previously he had tried to make it overlook the plebeian beginnings of the house of Beauharnais), as long as the name of the wife of General Beauharnais covered the title of Vicomtesse, and longer still, Josephine used her widespread connexions with the powers of the moment to assist jeopardized friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. In one of the countless memoirs of her friends we read: "Madame Beauharnais's ease of manner . . . and her natural goodness of heart attracted many to her . . . and offered her, at least for the moment, in view of her considerable influence with influential men of the time, the possibility of rendering manifold service."

'Almost too zealously (like Alexandre with his proclamations

and factless reports) Josephine now wrote letter upon letter, standing guarantee for suspects, pleading mercy and justice for the imprisoned, recommending applicants for office, and not even stopping at entreaties to revolutionists who were totally unknown to her, always relying on the name Beauharnais, even when the last atom of influence had begun to fade from that name; indeed, it must be admitted that she continued to write these letters when she could no longer have had any illusion as to the danger she incurred thereby.

The victories of the coalition forces kept the threat of the arrogant and foolish manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick — which hastened the fall of the kingdom — burning in the memory of France. A few acts of treason in the army had been proved; thus it was possible to count the first defeat of a usually victorious commander as betrayal. The watchword issued in July 1792, “France is in danger,” became more and more true as it passed from mouth to mouth; the dammed-up hatred toward the advance of the armies of the counter-movement became ever more blind against the unsuccessful defenders of the Revolution. Faster and faster followed the recalls and condemnations of generals. Soon actual defeat was not necessary; a want of victory was enough; even less — the hapless Ire Ward, who served the Revolution faithfully, had to die merely because he was not a Frenchman.

Alexandre Beauharnais, however, sat meanwhile in Strasbourg, wrote, delivered speeches, made love, survived his brave former commander Luckner, and still blindly trusted in the persuasive power of his personality, when in Paris the eloquence of great convictions did not save one of the leaders of the Gironde from the guillotine or suicide and when the gloomy butchers, who would not spare even Danton, were beginning to suspect the man of action. Silence had become a dangerous new weapon in the Convention and in the Commune. Had Alexandre been close to the

scene, he surely would have learned from the example of Robespierre and Saint-Just — men he had known — and he might have lived a few days longer. But, for all his quick perception of situations, he had been led by the success of his outpourings into the belief that he was perfectly safe. So he continued steadily on his way.

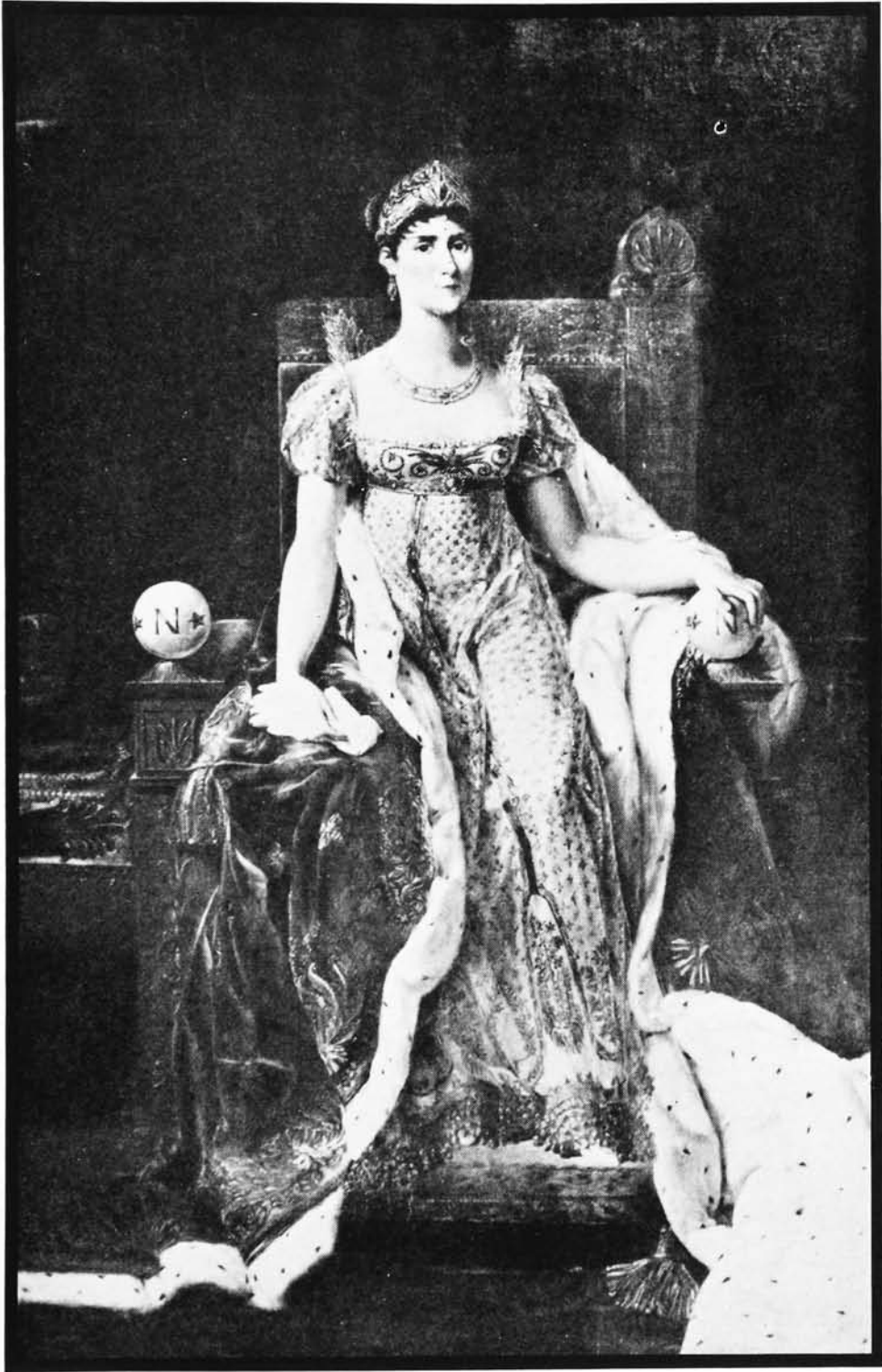
A new distinction confronted him: he was proposed as Minister of War. But Alexandre learned at the same time that strong protests had been raised in the Commune against his appointment — he, a former noble, an ex-aristocrat. This first opposition and his recollection of the lately frequent change in ministers made him lose his desire for the post. In his letters of refusal (whose sly flatteries to the men of power dripping with blood elegantly stressed the antique phrases on the virtue of the citizen) he declared that he preferred defending France to all other honours. But the time for this cautious modesty, which was broadcast to the public through the official newspapers, was ill-chosen, and Alexandre was suddenly forced to believe his own words.

That bulwark of the Revolution on the right bank of the Rhine, Mayence, was besieged, and asked urgently for relief, just as once Guadeloupe had called for Alexandre's father. But in the way of the old Marquis at Martinique, Alexandre hesitated at Strasbourg; it was days before he gave his strong, well-cared-for army the order for departure, and when finally he did set off (ostensibly to accomplish those great deeds he had proclaimed), it was only, instead of leading his sixty thousand men in forced marches against the enemy, once more to make camp a short way off and wait — for what? For the army of the Moselle, it was said, but that was entirely unnecessary; even if not, at least he should have tried to make connexion with it across the Vosges. He waited a week, then another one; there were a few encounters at the outposts, and many reports to Paris, and that was all. Mayence surrendered to superior forces — and Alexandre, in more messages, reviled the defenders,

whose defeat he could have prevented with his sixty thousand, and retreated. What was the matter with him? He knew that Valenciennes had been taken by the Austrians, and must already have heard that Toulon had fallen to the English, who had effected a blockade of French harbours, that a Sardinian army had marched into France, and that the revolts in the Vendée and Calvados, in Lyons and Marseilles, were covering more and more territory. These certainties of danger to the new Republic should have spurred him to make one little effort — all the more since he also knew that Custine had been accused, and he must surely have understood that inactive behaviour would be viewed differently now from what it was in the time of his father. Or did he, in the end, believe that he had not refused to act? Had his conviction that whatever he did was right found even in this miserable début as commander an explanation in his worth?

It seems so; for his next act was one of a man who is hurt in his innermost self: he handed in his resignation. It was refused, for the deputies of the Convention did not yet appreciate the situation; they still had confidence in the patriotism of Alexandre Beauharnais. But Alexandre insisted in a childish and terrible manner: he pointed out his relation to a now outlawed class, a tie which had gone unnoticed thus far. He was exhorted forbearingly and still trustingly. He became obdurate. Finally he reported himself sick and surrendered his command to an inferior; and all this in sight of the approaching army of the coalition. Then his resignation was accepted; his last order for retreat was countermanded by the people's deputies.

And now? No case for arrest and execution before the swift justice of the times was so clear as that of Alexandre Beauharnais. But still he was not arrested, nor even reminded of his protestations of eagerness to fight as a common soldier under the flag of the Republic — he simply was dismissed and sent back to his estates.



THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

Painting by Guillaume Lethière, in the Museum at Versailles

Here he began with new zeal his activity as orator, which had been only slightly interrupted by his military duties. Wherever there was the smallest political club, Alexandre appeared, thundered revolutionary tunes, became a member, even president here and there, drowned out the most radical speakers, boasted that before anybody else he had demanded the death of the King (beheaded a year ago), and almost forgot that only a short time previous he had been Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Rhine. But there were others who did not forget.

In spite of the *lois des suspects*, which overcrowded the prisons and daily increased the number of carts bearing victims to the guillotine, Alexandre felt himself entirely secure in his province. He had repeatedly affirmed his adherence to the Jacobins, black on white, had been elected mayor of the community adjoining his estates, and had there founded a particularly radical political club, which was constantly at hand for the delivery of an incredible amount of rhetoric and whose approval seasoned for him those days in which, according to his own words, "his head grew weary in the good of the Republic, and his heart exhausted itself in efforts and wishes for his fellow citizens." Most decidedly he had stayed away from Paris too long for him to understand the mechanics of the wheel which now was spinning fate. The number of his informants had decreased, and those who did remain were of no consequence. Strangely enough, it was Josephine who proved his best guide, for she, horror-stricken at what was happening around her, began finally to understand the meaning of the political conversations to which she was so often a party. But even she could not have foretold what broke one March day into Alexandre's oratorical provincial peace: the appearance of the deputy of the Committee of Public Safety, who had an order to arrest the former Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Rhine and to bring him to Paris.

What arrest meant, Josephine, from her own frightful daily

experience, knew better than Alexandre. He, to be sure, had often loudly called for arrest, but he had never actually seen how short the way to death had become, and still now he believed himself safe, because irreplaceable. Josephine's horror at the news of Alexandre's confinement in the Luxembourg prison, and her desperate efforts to save him, in which she forgot her own safety, are used by some authors, who spare no pains in trying to make Josephine a model for young womanhood, as proof that she had, through all the years, really waited for him and loved him alone. Well, Josephine had already exerted herself for so many others that she could hardly hesitate when it came to a question of the father of her children, the life or death of the man who had made her a wife. There remains in the lives of many women, after love, even after attachment, has passed, a sympathetic blood tie to the first man, the man who accomplished the transformation of the substance of her body, no matter what her relation to other men in later years may be.

Josephine exhausted herself with petitions and imploring letters on Alexandre's behalf. But wherever she went, she heard of new arrests; those were the days when the expression was coined that good society met only in prison. Compassion and terror filled Josephine's heart; her courage and vitality never once were conscious of danger to herself; she still fought on against the hopeless ordinance, even after Alexandre had been transferred to the prison of the Carmelites, whose very name had awakened terror since September 1792.



CHAPTER FOUR



TERROR

When the presentation of a single life-story approaches events historically important to all mankind or is even vitally woven into them, it is indeed difficult for an author to resist the temptation to transfer the great stress of these common happenings into such portions of his work as permit of it. In times which were fortunate in not belonging to "great history," it may well do to view events incisive to the whole as also decisive for the individual, and to relate general movements to one consciousness. But whoever has himself passed actively and painfully through a period which can perhaps be called "great" will stop first and ponder the advisability of such procedure. If he has, say, experienced the war as a soldier, he will doubtless be reminded of the fright that was his when, returning to his own town from the engagement with death, he saw exquisitely dressed people laughing when they came from a theatre, as if the whole terrible slaughter had never existed; or when he heard in common conversation gay, even wanton women called war-widows, a term which to him had been clothed with mythical horror. On the other hand, it will occur to him that he once read letters which most amusingly reported the festivities of a betrothal without ever mentioning a cholera epidemic which was then raging with the worst devastation in a century. Or he will recollect the

diary of Louis XVI, before referred to, with its lists of hares, pheasants, and partridges killed, and many other diaries and letters from places and times that were marked with historical importance in which there was no mention by even a single notation of the existing conditions.

With such experience in mind it has seemed best not to emphasize history in Josephine's life, but since history from this time forward began to be for her a sort of chronic disease, it is well to understand that she, being no hypochondriac, adapted herself to the illness as well as she could and led her life almost oblivious of the malady. It is true that, at this stage of Josephine's biography, when the disease first becomes acute, the question arises as to whether the author, who knows so well how all these matters stand later on, should pretend he did not know what was coming: how can the search for the real significance in her life best be made? — that is, her actions and reactions behind the great excitement — but the reader is interested in the answer, not the question; and the author retires to his reply, his representation.

Josephine was now thirty years old, pretty, clever, and certain that she knew herself perfectly. She had already had a number of affairs — fewer, however, than were attributed to her. Measured by standards other than her own, they had not been great affairs, and the experience she derived from them served only to assist in repetition. To her, of course, with her mixture of sensuality and curiosity, sentimentality and dislike of solitude (all traits of a sociable as well as amorous temperament), each of these relations began as the great love, and when, to the exaggerated expectations of a nature seeking a centre in the being of another person, the inevitable disappointment at the immeasurably exalted idea of the partner set in, she gave way to much excited grief, on which she fed as long as she could; that is, until a new affair displaced it. But at this dangerous school of 1793, in which she was now a pupil, her

belief in wonders fast abated, and she learned a new, quite weighty lesson: that this business of love, which filled life with such exquisite agitation, could carry with it advantages other than mere romance — advantages necessary in the lives of many women. It can be said of Josephine that she still at this time fell in love as before (indeed, she even employed her customary illusions) as soon as she found the right man, but now to be the right man her lover had to possess, besides the attributes which affected her (and it became a more and more indispensable *besides*), the ability to be useful to her. Such a man she needed more and more. Apart from the immediate danger to life, which, as long as she could, she ignored, there was a growing need for money, which increased from month to month, and a daily worry over food necessary for the next meal. The fact that Josephine had always lived in very casual pecuniary circumstances did not ease her distress now. Although she heard and mockingly passed on the many bitter *mots* of the time on the prevalent misery, her heart grew heavier and heavier. For now she was entirely cured of her previous indifference to money; she had learned its connexion with the many beautiful things of the world. From the simple ardour she had once had for fine dresses and jewels there developed a passionate and well-informed longing for all the appurtenances of smart life. Her bohemian attitude toward living and domesticity, which had been germinated in her by the life on the island (since everything was there done by slaves), her now refined sensibilities had further educated. She had learned her lesson thoroughly, in food and drink, in clothes, jewels, carriages, linens, the requisites for the care of the body: from the healthy, strong, indiscriminate appetite of her girlhood, which had been so easily satisfied with whatever there was, from this former greed there now sprang (new knowledge sets new hunger) an expertness, an ability to enjoy the shades, the nuances, of living. But just when she had taught herself so much of

the art of taste (the rudiments of which Alexandre had been unable to find in her), this art was disregarded and disapproved to the extent that a sympathy with it was found, even in so great a leader of the Revolution as Danton, to be a crime deserving of death. At this time of prescribed high prices, when every necessary of living disappeared mysteriously and only reached a few of the consumers in roundabout ways, at this time of depreciation of paper money, of forced loans, of the last dissolution of private life, of "virtue" as law (whose infraction was threatened by death), at such a time the full attainment of the delight of the senses was a gift of nature hard to bear. But above everything Josephine wanted to live, and at any price; thus she skipped the last classes in her school of adjustment and bloomed, despite all threats, more sweetly and alluringly than ever. She gave love and received it. But because she was a product of the chaotic transition, she was not impressed by the merit and performance of men, but, above all, by their momentary value and power. So value and power became closely related in her with the seductiveness of men. And her men helped her, advised her, shielded her, so long as they were able to help, advise, or shield. From them Josephine learned the protective colouring of the times: she practised the gestures and behaviour of the sans-culottes. For the sake of form she sent her children out as apprentices — Hortense was needlewoman to a servant Josephine had had many years; Eugène worked with a cabinet-maker; she even urged the children to make friends with the youth of the streets and, like the others, to take part in the generally prevailing street-traffic in unnecessary household goods. She spoke to the common people familiarly; she wrote letters, full of approval of the sans-culotte order, to powerful men who were personally inaccessible to her; in short, she did — still without fear for herself — whatever her friends advised her, those friends who understood that the *lois des suspects* held tricks against everybody, and innumerable ones against the nobility.

Necessary and justifiable as these laws may have been for the protection of the young Republic at this dangerous time, they nevertheless overreached their aim in that they opened to human wickedness and meanness an unlimited field of activity. Whoever wished to rid himself of a personal enemy, a rival, a business competitor, tried it with a denunciation. Disguised by patriotic zeal, the informers' trade thrived, whether it was bent on inheritance, the acquisition of land, or a prize of any description; and only too often these informers were gratified by the fall of neighbouring "better people," or simply by a selfish, malicious joy. Such a denunciation had been received by the Committee of Public Safety against the small circle of entirely inoffensive persons who sometimes still met at the country-house of Madame Hosten. Josephine was among those named. On the 21st of April 1794 she was arrested in her house in the rue Saint-Dominique.

After the usual confiscation of all documents that were found, the children were given into the care of Citizeness Lanoy, Josephine's former servant, the dressmaker in whose employ Hortense served as apprentice. The prison to which Josephine was assigned proved to be overcrowded, so she was taken to the Carmelite convent, that *Maison des Carmes* where Alexandre had previously been confined. This roomy house became after the dissolution of all cloisters one of the first of the makeshift prisons. Since Marie de Médicis had built the church, whose dome had become a model for the best baroque structures in Paris, such as the Sorbonne and the Panthéon, the monks had cultivated in the cloister gardens medicinal herbs, from which they brewed a mint balm, which had gradually become world-famous. On the 2nd of September 1792 the invading hordes had trampled the garden underfoot and had there begun the horrible massacre of the priests; and after the wholesale slaughter, of which there remained in the cells and corridors traces of sabre-cuts, pike-thrusts, and stale blood, they had sent the survivors in single

file through a door behind which, as behind the doors of Soviet cellars, the executioners waited. After that thousands of prisoners had been penned together in the monks' cells and had left behind manifestations of their hidden or evident pangs of death; there was the smell of dirt and deterioration, of sweat and ammonia; the walls were covered with scrawled inscriptions. Toward the end of April 1794, there were about seven hundred prisoners in the cloister, where, at the utmost, no more than sixty monks had lived; and yet this prison was considered one in which there was still room.

Josephine was housed with several ladies, among whom was the young and lovely Duchesse d'Aiguillon. When the first horror of arrest had subsided, imprisonment at the beginning did not appear too oppressive. Inside the cloister the prisoners enjoyed a certain freedom of movement; thus Josephine could see Alexandre and discuss with him the efforts which would be made for them outside, in the world. As visits by relatives were allowed in the presence of a guard, a secret means of communication was soon found. The children, who came with Lanoy, always brought with them Josephine's little dog. This much spoiled creature, which had promised in its youth to become a King Charles ¹ (a breed then fashionable, much as is a Pekinese or dachshund today), but which later developed into an exceedingly hairy pug, this Fortuné, provided the means for the secret correspondence, which was hidden between his collar and the shaggy coat. Josephine's gratitude for these services in later years turned the friendly, submissive mongrel, Fortuné, into a yelping, biting, uncontrollable beast, as is to be plainly seen in the letters of a great warrior, who, among his other scars, bore one which he had received in Josephine's bed from Fortuné. The outcome of this dog-mail was a series of letters to powerful personages

¹ It is not generally known that the reason this particular breed of Bolognese dog was called "King Charles" is a historical, artistic one: these dogs are to be seen in a number of English portraits by Van Dyke, a visible reminder that they were in fashion at the court of Charles I.

and a petition for their mother signed by both children. Alexandre, on the other hand, prepared a written defence, cataloguing and emphasizing his merits, which set the community in which he had been mayor in motion, and, in short, made himself noticeable in every way, at the very time when all safety lay in being forgotten. No express mention had been made, up to that time, of his military debacle; like Josephine and all other aristocrats, he had been arrested under the *lois des suspects*, which ordered solely the imprisonment, without trial or suit, until the conclusion of peace, of people suspected in one way or other. The wording of these laws explains why, even several weeks after her arrest, she, as well as the majority of those imprisoned under the same decree, still remained optimistic, even in the face of a recurrent horror which, by undeniable facts in ever increasing numbers, was wiping out the comparative calm of the earlier days.

Events outside, although distorted, were known to the prisoners. All news, however, had as little to do with politics for them as the spread of a plague has, for those endangered, with epidemiology. The fact that a new, powerful faction had been formed, apart from the Convention and the Commune, one which had already carried the Revolution over the most hopeless situations, was understood by the prisoners to be a strengthening of the rule by the group of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon. The reports of the victories of the revolutionary armies against internal and external enemies, and of the administrative successes of the new government, were drowned out by the statistics of this factional rule. Through it, by the official prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, it was expected that the attainment of fifty heads a day would be considerably increased. This and other news trickled day by day through the numerous channels into the prison. Here there were people of all stations, men, women, even half-grown children. One exchanges what one knows. As long as possible, there was almost a tacit agreement to

believe in the efficacy of the *lois des suspects*. Then, by degrees, the horror began; first with the common people, the workmen and unimportant citizens who had been brought on heaven knows what denunciation. Among the aristocrats there were educated men who knew what was going on, but they were obedient to the command which their many predecessors had laid down: bearing must be preserved. They prevented the spread of reports of terror, even invented and circulated cheerful news, and whispered the truth only among themselves. To the others they told hopefully of the dissension between the Robespierre faction and the members of the Committee of Public Safety. Still they could not deny that people disappeared from the cloister day by day. They could not refute the handwriting on the wall, the order to this or that one to pack his few belongings for departure — everyone knew where. It was said that soon there would be peace, or before that an overthrow, perhaps, and surely the moderates would make an end of such horror. But still it oozed out that in spite of all opposition the hideous bill of the lame Couthon had been passed, a bill which declared all delay in proceedings a crime, and indulgent formalities a danger to the State. And those to whom this was of the utmost concern realized finally that there were no more defenders, no individual legal action, that not law, but the conscience of the jury had to decide life or death — the *conscience*. . . .

The horror crept from cell to cell. In the hours when they were not allowed outside, the prisoners signalled to each other the number of those who had been taken away. The ones who were still writing their defence, such as Alexandre, were left. Everybody knew that the time had passed when procedure was based on essentially substantial accusations. And just then a hideous new menace took form: prison conspiracies were discovered. Some innocent intercepted letter, an obscure insignificant fact, was enough to bring summary action on whole groups of prisoners who had only their

quarters in common. And Fouquier-Tinville had expressed the hope that he could soon put up the sign " House for Rent " on the doors of the empty prisons.

The extreme vitality of Alexandre's self-confidence, the disciplined attitude of her aristocratic acquaintances, and, finally, her own almost passionate lack of cognizance of occurrences kept Josephine for an exceedingly long period under the illusion that nothing could happen to her. She lived as sociably as imprisonment permitted, saw Alexandre — who had fallen violently in love with the lovely Madame de Custine — for a longer time every day than she had during her entire married life, and entered into her first really friendly intimacy with him, since she could talk to him of the things which concerned her, without awe of him or uneasiness. These weeks extinguished for both of them the memories of the past. Josephine spared his unaltered sensitiveness, for she now fully understood that man is, above all, vain and sensitive and has to be " managed." In contrast to former days, she listened carefully when he spoke, let him tell her about the alluring Delphine de Custine, met them together, and on her part told him of her growing interest in an unusual young soldier who had recently been brought to the Maison des Carmes, the rude, cursing, very handsome General Lazare Hoche.

Hoche had become unpopular with the almighty of the Committee of Public Safety: it was said that he had refused to allow Saint-Just to look into his plan for attacking the enemy. So of what weight were all his victories? He was a traitor, and who asked for proof once Saint-Just had pronounced that word? As it had been deemed unwise to arrest him in the midst of his army, which loved its victorious leader, he had been, by an order to take over the chief command of the Italian forces, removed from the German theatre of war. Hardly arrived in Toulon, where a letter in the hand of Robespierre had preceded him, he had been arrested and taken to

Paris. He had demanded justice from Saint-Just and had received the reply that the justice he deserved would be granted him; then he had been imprisoned at the Maison des Carmes. This was not his first arrest; in the fury of persecution which followed the discovery of Dumouriez's treason he had been apprehended. Stoically he now bore his second arrest, convinced that it would end as the first had. The fear of death which travelled from cell to cell did not enter into his. It was this cheerful confidence in the midst of assumed bravery or uncontrolled lamentation that was the main factor in Josephine's being attracted to the big fellow with the long sabre-scar on his handsome face. At times, of course, his rage at arrest did burst forth in a torrent of filthy words which he had learned from his father, a stable-groom, and which were perfected under the tutelage of his first military friends, non-commissioned cavalry officers; but, soothed by the outburst, he soon roared convincingly with laughter, completely captivating Josephine. She had heard that Hoche was a military genius — she believed it, because she liked him, just as Robespierre believed he was a traitor, because he disliked him.

Josephine's moral biographers, who, if they even mention Hoche's name at all, are immediately filled with indignation, try to make of the man an intimate friend of Alexandre's, and bring forward as the strongest argument against the slandering imagination of those who accuse Josephine of an intrigue while in jail the fact that Hoche had been married hardly half a year. One of them even writes: "If you were to feel your head under the knife of the guillotine for some time, such ugly thoughts would soon pass." Poor Josephine! She was now more and more often the little Yvette of Trois-Ilets, not at all brave, but a creature trembling miserably for life, crying and longing for safety. And here was a big, strong, cheerful, quiet man who did not believe in the guillotine and who could lock the pretty Josephine (who did not neglect her

appearance, as did many of the other women) in his strong, consoling arms. Remember how quickly acquaintances become intimate on shipboard. How much more quickly must two people become friends on the death-dealing ship of a prison! Hoche had a room to himself, or, rather, a chamber, with a latticed window set high in the wall. Here, it is said, Josephine, driven by fear or exhaustion, a few times clandestinely sought refuge. She found no consolation with Alexandre; he may not have believed that she was in danger, he certainly no longer had hope for himself. Disconsolate and without faith, it took all his strength to force his heart, which had been the centre of his world, to be quiet. But perhaps in this exemplary bravery which everybody praised, only the enamoured Delphine de Custine could be comforted; not Josephine. For now the tides of deathly fear flowed everywhere. Toward evening there was the awful agony of reading the lists; then, if twenty-four hours of waiting were granted, came the gruesome noises all through the house of those who were being taken away: steps in the corridor, coarse, goading words, here and there a sob. Then the night, with its sweat and tears, its anguished dreams; and the morning (blue summer sky at the window) with its sure awakened knowledge that this was the last day. Oh, Josephine did not want to die; she had done nothing really good in life as yet, everything was still awaiting her. She had harmed no one, no one. This she cried out to d'Aiguillon and the two other women who tried to cheer her; no, she would not pretend that she did not care if she died. She shouted, wailed, and finally threw herself into Hoche's arms, longing for comfort and hope.

And every evening came the lists of those who were to be taken away. Long since, the prisoners had noticed anxious, shifty-eyed men who tried to mix into every conversation, apparently as fellow inmates. Now it was known that the house was full of spies, some even voluntary informers, who each day supplied the desired num-

ber of names to fill the lists; and that there was no longer hope for those who were taken away was also known. The suit of the one hundred and sixty prisoners of the Luxembourg who were the first to be accused of conspiracy, and many other such actions, which paralysed hope, furnished fearful day-dreams for those who waited. They imagined they saw before them Fouquier-Tinville, who had tried to have the guillotine erected in the session court of the tribunal and who had had the small prisoner's dock enlarged to the proportions of an amphitheatre for the groups of the accused; also the president, Dumas, who had two pistols lying before him on the table and who harassed the proceedings with his idiotic frenzies. In the courtyard of the tribunal, visible to every one of the accused, stood many harnessed carts, waiting for their freight of death. Since the action against the hundred and sixty Couthon could not complain about any careless delay. "At the hearing of these unfortunates, President Dumas had asked of one of them, Dorival: 'Do you know of this conspiracy?' 'No.' 'I was prepared for that answer, but it will be of no use to you. The next.' And he turned to a man named Champigny: 'Are you not a former nobleman?' 'Yes.' 'The next. Guédreville, are you a priest?' 'Yes, but I have taken the oath to the Constitution.' 'You have not the right of free speech.' To another: 'Ménil, were you not a servant to the member of the Constituent Assembly Menou?' 'Yes.' 'The next. Vély, were you not architect to the sister-in-law of the King?' 'Yes, but I was dismissed in disgrace in 1788.' 'The next. Gondrecourt, have you not a father-in-law in the Luxembourg prison?' 'Yes.' 'The next. Durfort, did you not serve in the Life Guards?' 'Yes, but I was discharged in 1781.' 'The next . . .'" (Thiers).

This was the hearing, and no matter how the single sentence allowed in reply read, it was sufficient for conviction and death-sentence; the jury, which no longer took the trouble to ask proofs or hear testimony, thought, after it had thus wiped out fifty or sixty

lives with a word, that it had acted well and properly. Here those who become indignant over the bestialities of revolutionists (forgetting, of course, counter-revolutionists) must be reminded that the feeling for one's fellow man, which even at the present time is practised but rarely, is a comparatively modern discovery, and functions only during the pauses and armistices of the battle for existence. (The author cannot help mentioning a personal experience: the picture of a rosy young high-school teacher fastens itself on his memory. It is the portrait of a model young paterfamilias, who was wont to depict to his pupils in a most damning manner, whenever he taught the history of the French Revolution, the inhuman atrocities of all the participants in the Reign of Terror. Just beside this there is another picture, of this selfsame rosy young man, but now in the grey field-uniform of an artillery officer. Behind him on the wall hangs, with his field-glasses for watching a target, a hunting-carbine, on whose butt-end are carved neat parallel notches, a centimetre long. Each of these stands for an "enemy shot down" whom the professor had "caught" in his leisure time, under cover of the infantry. When the author last saw him, there were ninety-four lines on the butt-end, and in his conscience there was peace.)

Fouquier-Tinville seemed to be accomplishing his purpose: in the Maison des Carmes the numbers taken away far exceeded the new arrivals. These new ones brought a report to which only a few of the prisoners reacted with hope, the majority with terror: that something secret was going on, that Robespierre kept away from the Convention and showed himself only to the Jacobins. Well, very few relied on the Convention, which had always yielded in everything. Would Robespierre now make an end of this Convention? An oppressive sultriness, which gave hope to some of the people outside for a great liberating outbreak, penetrated beyond endurance the damp, evil-smelling rooms of the prison. Was it not possible that the next list would contain all their names?

Lazare Hoche's stay at the Maison des Carmes did not last even four weeks. He parted from Josephine fully confident that they would meet again, although he was assigned to that prison which was commonly considered the first step to the scaffold. After he was taken away, there began for Josephine days of terror in which there was no light. The rumours which formerly she had taken in an almost abstract manner now assumed a panopticon-like reality: the blond head of Lamballe on the pike, all the heads of the "notable" victims which the executioner held up by the hair before he threw them into the basket of sawdust, all the faces of charm and spirit which she had known, she now saw with ghastly, wide-open dying eyes and dripping red neck-lines. She saw the court of sessions, the hopeless hearing, heard the conviction, and felt the knife cold on her neck. She cried out like a frightened animal. Her fellow prisoners, women who had become fond of her, strained every effort to carry her over these crises of fear. But the intervals became shorter and shorter. Among the ghastly idyllic similes of those days the one of the gardener penetrated her most horribly: that gardener who cut the luxurious growth of the trees and picked off the vermin and dead leaves. Wild revolt in her whole hungry, unstilled life-substance threw itself against this damned extinction of life. She was here, she moved and bloomed. What did she care for the state of Robespierre, the horrible virtues of Saint-Just? Let them execute murderers, but, for God's sake, not beings whose only fault was a name or something like it.

In those last days of Fructidor and the first of Thermidor the gardeners were very busy, and, together with some dangerous or useless weeds, many harmless blooms were cut away. A giant hand reached blindly into the swarms inside the prisons and took out whatever it grasped: pretty women, scholars, drunkards picked up on the streets, prostitutes, dreamers, children, real revolutionists, and people of every age and position who had no interest of any

kind in politics. Alexandre Beauharnais was among them — and as he took leave of his prison friends and Josephine, he knew it was the end. He was taken to the Conciergerie, the antechamber of death. With him was his friend Prince Salm-Kyrburg, who had loved Jean-Jacques, had believed in the rights of man, and had ill-advisedly remained in France; he now experienced his reality of revolution in a systematic conviction and a cart-ride to the scaffold, and at last, with newly found arrogance, accepted death as deliverance from such humanity.

Alexandre was accused, not of high treason or desertion in face of the enemy, but of participation in one of the prison conspiracies, which was proved to the jury before the action began. When he learned that he was not to be tried alone, but must stand with many others and receive his ready-made conviction as one of scores, he wrote his last letter to Josephine. In reading it one wonders if here, even in the face of death, this former pupil of Patricol had composed a final rhetorical outburst for posterity or whether — and let us hope this — the letter was written as a sort of direct defence with regard to possible censors in the prison. In any case, it reads: “From all appearances at the hearing to which a number of prisoners have today been subjected, I am the victim of criminal slander on the part of some aristocrats in the Maison des Carmes, who call themselves patriots. The assumption that this hellish machination will follow me to the revolutionary tribunal leaves me no hope of seeing you again, my friend, nor of ever embracing my children. I do not need to tell you how sorry I am; my tender affection for them and my brotherly associations with you can leave you in no doubt as to the feelings with which I part from life, under these conditions. . . . In the same way, it fills me with regret to leave this native land that I love so much, for which I would have given my life a thousand times and which not only shall I be able to serve no longer, but which will put me out of its heart because it considers

me a traitorous citizen. This dismal thought still does not deter me from asking you to keep my memory fresh in your heart, to see to it that I again become honoured by proving that a whole life devoted to the service of France and to the triumph of liberty and equality must refute ignominious slanderers, who are themselves suspect. . . . Any effort on behalf of my rehabilitation must of course be postponed, for in times of revolutionary stress a great people which fights for the breaking of its chains must surround itself with a just distrust and must fear more the escape of a guilty man than the destruction of an innocent one. . . . I die in peace, which indeed allows emotion for the dearest feelings, but which grants the courage characterizing a free man, a pure conscience, and an honourable soul, whose burning desires are for the welfare of the Republic. . . . Farewell, my friend, find comfort in my children; console them, enlighten and teach them that for the sake of public spirit they should wipe out the recollection of my execution, remembering only my services and my right to the gratitude of my country. Farewell. You know those that I love; be a comfort to them and prolong by your care my life in their hearts. Farewell. I clasp you and my children for the last time to my bosom."

What is to be said for this letter written in the face of death the reader will find for himself, even though a translation will imperfectly render the cramped style. It must be remembered that this recitation is the farewell to life of a man thirty-four years old.

As were also the other fifty-four who were tried with him, Alexandre was submitted to the usual farcical examination, to which replies were of no value; he was found guilty and sentenced to death. With that good bearing which was almost a matter of course in those days when the art of elegant dying had been brought to such high development, he ascended the steps of the scaffold on the 5th Thermidor. It is said that in the five days which followed, the cattle brought to Paris, scenting the blood, could not be driven past this place of execution, this "head-factory of Samson" (the exe-

cutioner). To be sure, the resourceful venders who tried to sell miniature guillotines found a few customers, just as the paid street-singers found listeners to their scoffing verses about the executed. But the blood intoxication of the masses had long since given way to dreary horror. One historian writes that if all the women in the carts on their way to the places of execution, instead of concentrating on a stoical attitude, had cried out through the town their fear of death and their curses against the executioners, the nerves of the Parisians would soon have led to a revolt of compassion. The slaughterers of the type of Legendre, who before the execution of Louis XVI had proposed to cut the King into as many pieces as there were sections of the country, and who loudly boasted that he would gladly eviscerate any aristocrat, statesman, or writer and eat his heart, now were silent; the murdering had become a coldly organized administrative affair. Although lamentation or compassion could now be made a crime deserving of death, curses and groans ran like a fearful whispering through the great town that crouched like a poultry-yard under a circling hawk. Everyone knew about the little Nicolle, the sixteen-year-old working girl who was condemned to death for trying to bring food to a prisoner and who, while kneeling on the scaffold, had asked the executioner: "Is this the right way, sir?" All too many obviously innocent citizens had been seen on the way to death for there still to be any pleasure in the spectacle; everyone knew that tomorrow he might turn from spectator to actor.

Those last days of July were the hottest in years. In the mornings the walls of the houses still radiated the heat of the day before. Refuse smelled everywhere in the neglected city. The scanty food came half-spoiled to the people, and whoever did not cry vomited. Robespierre, the man in the blue coat from the rue Saint-Honoré, was seen no more, but ran like a murderous ghost through every mind. Something was happening — with him, against him? There was hardly a breath in the fear-choked throat of the volcano.

That the people had tired of killing was not known in the prisons,

where the terrible reality was still distended with horror. It was said in some prisons that the hordes would break in and slaughter all the inmates, but this report had not as yet penetrated the *Maison des Carmes*. Her prisoners simply "drew their tickets in the lottery of death, knowing that each would be a winner," and every day more of them were taken away on the twenty-four-hour tide of death. It cannot be certainly determined just when the news of Alexandre's execution reached Josephine. Up until then she had tried to tell her fortune with cards, but only too often she turned up the ace of spades, the black fear, and broke down again, crying, tearing her hair, and letting herself be slowly comforted, only to go back once more to the cards. In later years she told the story of those days all too often, until she gradually invented an image of the prisoner she had wanted to be: a comforter to the other women, a resigned, grieving mother, who thought ever of her children. In her own report (a lovely legend) she tried to collect the general horror of these days and nights into explicit facts. Thus it is related that the prison guard one day took away her bed, with the explanation that she would no longer need it; that, anticipating the "last dress," she had herself cut off her hair, to leave it to Eugène and Hortense. Somewhere else it is said that her trial had already been arranged and that only a sudden illness which the prison doctor pronounced as fatal offered her a life-saving delay. To these legends belongs the one which states that the beautiful Térézia Cabarrus was also a prisoner at the *Maison des Carmes* (which she surely never entered), that she had promised to save Josephine, and that she kept her promise.

There is a charming anecdote of a man in a Galician village whose son participated in some small, forgotten war. The father, it is said, every day had someone read the newspapers to him, and at each story, were it famine in India or revolution in Nicaragua, he asked the reader: "Just what good does this do my son?" Such

questions can be heard in the series of reports on the life of Josephine, where every event of importance is directly associated with her. If such correlation is to be believed, the conclusion will be reached that the whole historical 9th Thermidor was arranged solely for Josephine's sake. One of the most common of these naïve fancies is this: that the 11th Thermidor took place because Tallien wanted to free Térézia from prison — and that the latter, mindful of her promise to Josephine, urged her lover quickly to overthrow Robespierre. In such or similar manner is Josephine made the heroine of the sentimental operetta of Térézia and Tallien to which the manifold reasons for this great day of the Revolution have been reduced. The only personal notes in the whole affair were doubtless nothing but Robespierre's desire to compromise Tallien by arresting his mistress, and Tallien's retaliation, actuated by a hope to save Térézia. As far as Josephine is concerned, it is safe to say that she already knew Tallien quite well, but whether she ever met Térézia before 1794 is entirely uncertain. Something will be said of Térézia Cabarrus-Fontenay-Tallien in more detail later on, as it was through Tallien that Josephine became for a time the friend of Notre-Dame-du-Thermidor.

This description of events (which have been so gaudily covered by the paper blossoms of intentional legend) must suffice to report the great tragedy of the 8th and 9th Thermidor, whose results reached finally into the frightened house near the rue de Rennes, the Maison des Carmes. At the news of Alexandre's execution, Josephine considered herself lost. When the paroxysms of despair stopped, she collapsed as if bled to death from exhaustion, and no word of comfort by her fellow prisoners penetrated to her, no word of that shyly flickering hope which was now whispered through the cloisters. She had given herself up for lost; thus the world was at an end, and all life on earth throbbed with her in a deathly fear at the inevitable fall of the knife. Formerly she had listened eagerly to

each promising rumour. But when the incredible news of what had really happened finally reached the prisoners, she had to be forcibly roused before she could be made to understand the great good fortune. It is said that on the 10th Thermidor one of the women prisoners, standing at a window looking out on the street, was noticed by a woman of the people, who immediately began to make signs. In the pantomime which followed, she pointed first to her dress (*robe*) and then to a stone (*pierre*), and when the combination had been understood as Robespierre, she made the unmistakable gesture of decapitation, clapped her hands to her thighs, and began to dance. This first information was followed by accurate details: that Robespierre and his adherents had been drowned out in the Convention, arrested, freed by the Commune, and rearrested after the capture of the Hôtel de Ville; that the man in the same blue coat in which he had presided over the Feast of the Supreme Being had lain on the table of the Convention, with a dirty little leather bag as bandage to the jaw which had been riddled by bullets, that on his way to the place of execution he had been cursed and spit upon, and that finally a roar of joy and the deafening handclapping of thousands had filled his last moment on earth.

It took a long time for Josephine to understand that all immediate danger had passed and for the fumes of horror to disappear from her innermost life. When, eight days after the overthrow of the Reign of Terror, she was informed that she was free, death, which had for so long been domiciled within her, made one last grasp. She replied to the news with a long, deep faint. And when she finally went, her fellow prisoners envied her for the chance that released her among the first as little as they had blamed her for her cowardice.

Térézia Cabarrus had been freed on the 12th Thermidor. That Josephine was given her liberty so soon she has herself attributed to Tallien, and has thanked him for it.

Michelet relates that he often asked people who had lived through this time: “ What, after the violent shock of August 1794, did you desire most? ” “ To live,” was always the reply. “ And what else? ” “ To live.” “ What do you mean by that? ” “ To walk in the sun along the quays, to breathe, to look at the sky, the Garden of the Tuileries, already turned yellow, to touch myself, to feel a head still on my shoulders, and to say: ‘ But I still live! ’ ”



CHAPTER FIVE



LUXURY AND STARVATION

When Josephine stepped from the confines of her early years, from the insular custody of her family, then from her marriage and the idyllic instruction of the Abbey of Panthémont, there was still dominant in her blood a fragment of the old social and religious constraint, which accompanied her over the threshold — an awe at life, a sort of convalescent melancholy, which showed her the new freedom, however, as something quite sociable. Hence when the prisoner from the *Maison des Carmes* set out with her scanty belongings (scantier now even than when she had come back from Martinique) on her return journey to the world of the living, to the altered world of people risen from the dead, she was herself filled with a changed zeal for life. “For then a madness gripped the world, to live and enjoy, to take every possible pleasure for the unhappy body which had lately barely escaped being cut in two, to take all kisses for the mouth which had almost tasted the sawdust in the basket, to feast on every voluptuous fancy, all admiration, every caress to the skin which the hangman had nearly laid bare. . . .” Nevertheless, even at this time a definite social problem presented itself in connexion with the greed for life and enjoyment which was everywhere breaking forth from the long endured

fear of death. As at the time after Panthémont Josephine had been determined to secure a position in the world, so now she sought entrance into a circle where she might successfully enjoy herself. But desire and accomplishment were now very different, as was everything since the days of Panthémont. The decaying park of those times had become jungle and thicket. Josephine quite often had a deep little wrinkle between her eyebrows. To be sure, she saw before her innumerable small practical tasks, but she never faltered in her determination to find a place in this world as it was, this blossoming thicket. Dreams and reveries had always had their part in her life; even at the beginning of her days at the Maison des Carmes there had been in her something of the "young prisoner" of André Chénier, and in her outcries a likeness to the lament in *Fidelio*. All this had now sunk dark and unwilling to the bottom of her being.

After the great miracle had taken place, she had thought that everything would come easily, as a matter of course. The fact that fate had dealt so well with her appeared incredible enough for her now to expect all her demands to be fulfilled. Demands had taken the place of dreams. To be allowed to breathe again seems wonderful the first day; the next it is sweet; then — it is taken once more for granted. To be able to go wherever desire leads is in itself happiness enough, but then the question arises: where to go? Other considerations enter, and gradually, all unnoticed, the net of small necessities is cast and drawn once more. Life began much as it had after Panthémont, only in other dimensions. Familiarly there arose in the consciousness of existence the question: existence on what? That was extremely hard to answer. But as Josephine felt within herself the certainty that there must be, if no single obvious, definite reply, surely a variety of ones complementary to the conditions, she began, before anything else, to look around calmly.

For people whom it is customary to call amorous, love — or

often, rather, its alarms and excursions — is a drug without which life is empty, senseless, unexciting. Josephine had almost grown accustomed to this drug, but in the fearful deprivation-cure of the prison she had taken only small doses of it, through her occasional meetings with Hoche. Thus she was still not in bondage; being in love still meant to her an enhancement of the joys of feeling, the liveliness of champagne, ease in thought and decision. She had experienced Hoche's being freed before her, and in the light of the intoxication of her short love for him she examined the confused circumstances of her life and understood with hard humour that her position was now similar to that on the ship in which she had taken flight from Martinique. What her fellow travellers possessed she could not as yet foresee. But the conviction within her that they would share what they had was as strong as her own willingness to give whatever she could.

In her house in the rue Saint-Dominique, where she had been arrested, she found her possessions sealed, and for the moment everything was inaccessible. Alexandre's estates had been seized; and because the national properties which he had acquired were only partly paid for, all his movable belongings had been, after his death, sold at auction. The old people at Fontainebleau, who during the time of the Terror had hidden themselves away, had, besides their lives, saved only enough, after the sale of their house, to live in the most moderate circumstances, so that at best they could not be expected to do more than receive Hortense now and then. And it was still harder than ever to try to get anything from the islands. For Martinique had that year been taken by the English, and letters to it, in consequence of the state of war, arrived only in long, roundabout ways.

As her quarters in the rue Saint-Dominique had been sequestered, Josephine took others in the rue de l'Université, which belonged to a friend. Whether this friend lived there too at this time, rented it

furnished, or simply gave it over entirely to Josephine is not known. On the whole, not many reliable details concerning the period of her life immediately after her dismissal from prison can be ascertained, while there is a profusion to be had concerning a few months later; also, relative to the time when the event approached which made of her a historical personage, a really unmanageable amount of data has gradually been amassed.

It may be assumed that Hoche, out of the wages which accumulated during his stay in prison, helped Josephine to obtain her indispensable needs. It is certain that he relieved her of any worry over Eugène; the boy was now twelve years old and hence already at the age when, in accordance with the military custom of that time, he could begin his training as some sort of officer's orderly on Hoche's staff. The General remained, from the time of his release until his departure for a new command, all together twenty-nine days in Paris; when one deducts the two which elapsed before Josephine herself was freed, the time for her trip to Fontainebleau — also that necessary for Hoche's own duties and their common activities — it is easy to see that not many days were left for this love which had so tragic an exposition. And even of the days which did remain, the last were for Hoche quite clouded and troubled. What really happened is not certain. It is said, however, that Josephine rewarded Hoche's aide-de-camp, who had brought her a letter, in too generous a manner for such a service, and that the young officer, in the fashion of the time, boasted too loudly of his remuneration. It may be that the heady drug of the prison now proved to be somewhat ineffective; all the more so since from the veins through which a creature of the times drew nourishment, there gushed many allurements for a heart easily enticed. But, as was said before, we know only a few facts, to which this one belongs which has been indisputably ascertained from preserved letters: namely, that Hoche, gloomy and full of resentment, finally left Josephine; that he never-

theless, in spite of many bitter allusions to her unfaithfulness, took Eugène with him; and that, probably comforted by his young wife for the treatment he received from “the treacherous, coquettish women of Paris,” he yet remained Josephine’s friend to the end of his short life.

In the beginning of September, then, Hoche quitted Paris, leaving Josephine with a heavy heart to a world whose hero and saviour he was able to be, but whose fellow citizen he did not understand how to become. This frayed and broken love lingered until there began for Josephine her great year, the pivotal one of her life, full of almost unbelievable adventure, the year into which the whole history of her existence can be crowded if only its romance is desired. In the time between the arrest and the skeptical, wavering, and slightly resigned use of an intrigue which introduced — so much against her will — a charming woman of lovely bearing and ever more doubtful reputation into the history and myth of the world the entire Josephine is bound up. The biographer, nevertheless, cannot from now on relate the facts as a novelist might, because of their doubtful accuracy; in particular during the winter months of this year, when Josephine, as one of a pleasure-seeking swarm of women, played society. It was in these months that she underwent the already mentioned metamorphosis, in which consciously or otherwise she became the charming Creole, afterwards so endlessly praised. She allowed herself to be carried away by the engulfing, opaque wave of the time, and with her growing artfulness she made herself so perfectly a part of that time that it is indeed difficult not to see, embodied in her, the entire physiognomy of the period.

Josephine at first did not have money to move; indeed, she had none for clothes (styles had changed so much); there was not even enough for food and drink. And everything had become so expensive it made her head ring to calculate. The servants that were taken

on again — the brave Lanoy before all — were wonderful. They not only did not care that they were paid no salary, but even helped with their savings, secured credit, and discovered secret ways of obtaining all the necessaries of life, which were concealed by reason of the depreciation of paper money and which were to be had only in certain shops in very small quantities. And even if the purchases thus made were more expensive — well, who counted so carefully in such times, especially when there was no precision about getting and spending? At any rate it saved the servants from standing in line half the night before shops where, even when they did gain admittance, everything had been sold. Josephine managed as her old acquaintances did: she bought wine from her hairdresser, who carried a bottle with him as a sample, batiste for her linens from a man whom she met at the house of a friend and who “accidentally” had a piece with him. This, after all, was amusing to her and was the way in which everybody carried on trade. The more enterprising spirits who had ready cash at their disposal bought up the assignats in provinces, where their value declined more rapidly, then exchanged them in the capital, and with the proceeds immediately bought goods which tomorrow and thereafter would hold their value. Thus almost everybody had some small stock of goods as a sort of savings bank, and all dealt with one another, buying, selling, exchanging. Although the great scarcity of money was general, everyone was willing to help all those to whom he felt any kind of alliance — and how quickly this bond of fellowship was felt! As the tide of the tempest ebbed, from which each had saved his life and a few of his possessions on the nearest reef, the Crusoes from every isle gravitated again toward one another. Old ties were renewed; fellow prisoners and kinsmen of the unlucky ones who had not lived to see the 9th Thermidor were friends as a matter of course. The storm had passed, the ship again sailed ahead (the devil knew for how long), and no one wished to be alone; every-

body wanted to talk, to listen, to laugh, to play, and in companionship to find all the pleasures of life. This zealous flight from loneliness ("nobody wants to be alone even for an hour, no one wants to eat alone or sleep alone," says a book of memoirs of those days), this general swarming together for amusement, as in the colonies, was entirely in harmony with Josephine's nature. As at home on the islands, where each one, after he had finished his work, sought the nearest group of people, so it was now in Paris, only that, except for the little trade that was carried on and the great hubbub over the need of money, there was, after the return of confiscated property and other restitutions by the State, less talk of work than formerly in Martinique. Josephine, who had never worked in all her life, now found herself in the midst of a conglomerate society which was driven together by a common hunger for enjoyment and money, for play and human proximity, and for a little mouthful of revived comfort. Wherever she thought it necessary, as for instance to the old Marquis and Aunt Renaudin, she justified her craze for society, which was so inconsistent with her recent widowhood, by saying she owed it to the memory of Alexandre and to her children to seek contact with people who could be useful to her in pressing her claims against the Republic. The mounting expense of all this contact made her take these claims more and more seriously and led her to invest money in all sorts of speculations, trying (and learning) to see an aim behind every social joy.

The first considerable contributions which made it possible for Josephine to go on with her pleasures and claims came from a man named Emmery, a banker from Dunkirk, whose acquaintance she had presumably made at the time when he was a deputy in the first National Assembly. This Emmery proved to be a helpful and altogether unselfish friend. He frequently lent her money, first entirely without security — and when these sums quickly melted away, he tried to bring Josephine into communication with her mother

and to get money for her from Martinique, in a roundabout way, through the neutral city of Hamburg.

All these people whom Josephine was now accustomed to see soon gave her a feeling of "position" — and she began to commend the interests of all the world (herself of course included) in letters and person to every man who was considered at all influential, whether she knew him or not. This activity necessitated a hackney-coach, took a lot of time, was of advantage to a few people, and furnished her with a host of new friends, one of whom at least was in every respect worth the time expended; that was Barras. It may be that Josephine had met him before, but the real friendship, which at first proved so enjoyable and advantageous and later of such consequence, started only after the episode with Hoche. This is to be seen in the resentful, untrustworthy memoirs of Barras, in which he speaks of Hoche's relation to Josephine. (That these memoirs, by the way, are as unreliable as Eugène's is a grievous loss to biographers of Josephine.) But before Barras takes his place in this story of Josephine, the position he held in those times must be pointed out, and something must be said of those powerful men, the dispensers of benefits.

Little as Josephine knew or cared about politics, she was a woman filled with unappeased desires, and, besides, one who needed a setting and sought for the best possible one in the place where power and influence seemed to lie. Frame and picture together were offered her by her liberator from prison, Tallien, whose mistress, now Madame Tallien, was clever enough to know how to create a centre for that group of politicians who were known as the Men of Thermidor. They every one of them had almost nothing in common except that in a certain sense they had profited by the fall of Robespierre and his friends, and that, in wishing their own terroristic past forgotten, they with one voice laid the blame for the human victims, whose killing they now called a crime, on the dead

Triumvirs. Also they all wished to hold their power and enjoy it, they — the upstart mediocrity without any original ideas — who came after the great incorruptible founders of the Republic.

Tallien had met Térézia Cabarrus in Bordeaux, where he had held the same office which Fouché had had in Lyons, Lebon in Arras, and Carrier in Nantes: namely, that of destroying those whom he considered counter-revolutionists. Térézia, of French descent, born and raised in Spain — where her father had been court banker — was at that time twenty years old and was married to a financier much her senior who had raised himself to the rank of count. Her beauty must have been extraordinary, for the otherwise contradictory reports about her are all agreed upon that. She is described as being of average height, long of limb, of perfectly rounded slenderness, with black hair and dark eyes, a very white skin, and beautiful teeth; all these perfections she employed to good effect with great vivacity, a ready wit, and radiant cheerfulness and, finally, by exquisite movement. If one adds to all this an alert intelligence founded on the most wonderful lack of consideration, a boundless desire for pleasure, and — where her own interests were not endangered — a decidedly good nature, one has a picture of Térézia, Notre-Dame-du-Thermidor.¹

It is said that Térézia while in Bordeaux had paid ship-passage for some political fugitives, was denounced for it, arrested, and brought before Tallien. It is certain that the terrible proconsul, who had missed in his eventful life the excitement of love — that tremendous stimulant which is to be found in the being of a woman — fell quickly and violently in love with Térézia and, moreover,

¹ There is a mass of information about her, the best book still being the old one by Arsène Houssaye. Anyone wishing to become acquainted with her is advised to read Houssaye, but not her memoirs, in which so much is omitted or passed over that two distinct, troubled life-histories could be made for her. The memoirs, to be sure, were written at a time when she had long been the wife of the Belgian Prince Chimay-Caraman and when she must willingly have veiled or erased many chapters of her life.

found a way to harmonize her aristocratic charm with his revolutionary ideas. As the mistress of a man greatly feared she was soon known and courted, and in many cases she made use of her power over the mighty to save endangered lives. Lastly, to be plain, documents have come to light which prove that frequently there was added to the satisfaction over her good deeds an opportunity to pay for beautiful, expensive, revolutionary and Amazonian dresses. When Tallien returned to Paris, she followed him. How Robespierre, in order to strike at Tallien, had her arrested, how she was released after the 9th Thermidor, and through political sentimentality was connected by the people with the fall of the tyrant, has already been related.

Tallien, not without some gratification to his vanity, brought Josephine, the former Vicomtesse, and his wife, once a Marquise, together; and these two immediately understood each other. Whatever advantage in years Josephine had over Térézia the latter made up for by her intimate knowledge of revolutionary behaviour. Otherwise they had enough in common: in spite of the difference in their ages, they were a little like children in the same school, who had to dissemble before the same teachers. Their aims were alike and their friendship began in a most favourable period: when both could profit by advice and speech in the newly formed order of life. Their fundamental simplicity, their strong sense of humour, for which the motley contacts of the time furnished cause enough for laughter, and, finally, the fact that they could make use of each other in various ways turned their friendship into real intimacy. At first Térézia had considerable advantage over Josephine; she was younger, and besides her beauty she had the attraction of the political legend which had been woven about her, and then, too, her husband was alive and in the government.

When she met Tallien, she had surely been influenced by his authority more than by his person; she had sold herself to him first

to save her life and then to profit by his position. Since she was so young, things developed just as a recent English author states: "Women have always been bought and sold. Nowadays they sell themselves and then seem to be in love with the purchaser perfectly genuinely." But at this time T  r  zia's love was beginning to decay. She got along quite well with Tallien, "tamed" him, cured him of his jealousy, and determined to help him to the best possible position — which, of course, was as much to her advantage as to his. She had plenty to do. Tallien's situation was not absolutely secure in those forgetful times; however, the aureole of the dragon-killer still helped him, and this T  r  zia kept zealously burnished. But there were all too often painful warnings which had to be borne in mind. For instance, the scene with Cambon, one of the few incontestable "Men of Integrity," against whom Tallien had risen imprudently in the Convention and who had replied, in the hearing of everyone: "So you attack me . . . well, now I shall prove that you are a thief and a murderer. As secretary of the Commune you have rendered no accounts; I have proof of this in the Finance Committee. You have ordered the expenditure of one and a half millions of francs for a project which covers you with shame. You have given no account of your mission to Bordeaux; of this I also have proof in the committee. You will always be suspected of complicity in the September crime, and I shall show this complicity by your own words, which should for ever condemn you to silence. . . ." And the worst was that Tallien could find only a stammering reply to these accusations. Fortunately Robespierre and Saint-Just had, for a time at least, spoiled in Parisians the taste for dangerous and costly integrity, and the honest public servants, when they were not on military duty, worked quietly and unobtrusively and left place and fame to the men of vanity. To reconcile the evident contradictions was the task which T  r  zia assumed, with an ability which was unbelievable in one of her years.

She took what room she could from Tallien's summer place, and with taste and imagination and radiant inconsideration for the money she expended, she turned it into what she could call a house: rooms in which a great number of people could sit and stand, eat and converse, and in which there were flowers, charming little vanities, silver, porcelain, and the other insinuating accessories which change a sitting-room into a drawing-room, in so far as the mistress of the house knows how to create what is called atmosphere. This, as a matter of fact, was not easy for T  r  zia at the beginning, for the majority of the men who accepted her invitations came primarily because most of the political clubs were closed, and without their wives, to whom there still clung too much of their recent past as "furies of the guillotine"; they came almost unwillingly, seeking arguments, forgetful of or as yet unfamiliar with the social graces which T  r  zia forced upon them; and much too often the mistress of the house had to use all her charm and wit to subdue their voices, to separate disputants, and to smooth Jacobin manners. Here she needed a woman's help, and this she got from Josephine from the very beginning. Since these two had smilingly told each other that now they could take off the guise of the sans-culotte as quickly as they had put it on, and since they had, divining the imperceptible signs, acknowledged themselves as ladies, they realized that the time once more had arrived for the woman of influence. And as T  r  zia knew that the best way to tame howling wolves was to howl with them, Josephine was welcomed by her as an assistant in the taming.

Much as this "society" may have promised to yield, it was highly expensive, and Tallien had to be very careful of the perquisites which were added to his meagre salary. It was easier for T  r  zia. Two months before, seeing the depressed, lamenting citizens fur-tively walking about dressed in the most miserable clothes, you would have thought that the virtuous norm of common brotherly

poverty had been reached. But now, since the disappearance of the "virtuous," the picture had changed radically. To be sure, the wailing was still mimicked by those who least needed to do it, but vanity had already broken through. The rags were gone, the tailors back to work, pins were revived in neckerchiefs, which were once again clean, snuff was offered, not from miserable little boxes, but from elaborate containers, rings again glistened on fingers, and those indispensable requisites to manly elegance, riding-canes with expensive handles, reappeared. Among the people who now distinguished themselves by their dress, jewels, and carriages were entirely new faces, names that never had been heard before, and manners also such as never had been seen before. But these names were soon remembered; rumours were connected with them — evil ones, of course, but fantastically laden with the glamour of figures in assignats which reached inconceivable heights. There were the army contractors, the great profiteers of paper-money speculation, the buyers of national estates; in short, all the men who emerged from the chaos with full pockets. Their appearance was the dove with the olive-branch to Térézia, the sign that there was again wealth, the guide to the sources on which one could draw. And she was not hesitant.

Since so much new and old power had disappeared overnight, since lands had been confiscated and all controllable property was in the hands of the State, wise beings such as Térézia understood the value of money in a new way: as a power which knows when to hide itself and when to reappear magnified after those who threaten it have fallen. And however scornfully or critically she and Josephine may have faced these new people with their rude behaviour, to the bankers and contractors they appeared as competent women who sided with every truly established power — such as the Church or England — by acknowledging and using it. The man upon whom Térézia directed her attack and to whom she finally

forced her way over several mediocre powers and fortunes was Ouvrard; he was indeed terribly clever, though not a very fine or very delightful man, but he was the great power among the newly risen financiers; his hand was in every large business, loan, or issue. He was, in short, the kind of man, of whom several have arisen in the last century from defeats as well as victories, who is given prestige in the art of living and hailed as patron of arts and letters (and even of the intellect) by everyone anxious to share in the power of his money. Before the beautiful Térézia could dive her hands very deeply into these pockets, things had, seen from the outside, gone a little topsyturvy for her. But all in all she managed well, allowed no claims to arise from either pleasures or profits, and even managed to keep most of her dismissed lovers in her train.

It was one of these — the most suitable — that she intended for Josephine, who was badly in need of an *ami en titre*. He was a former Vicomte, a Provençal (which was considered in continental France the direct opposite of the Creole), not without mental ability and taste, and, from Térézia's knowledge, likely to want and keep a friend who would have refinement without affectation, tenderness without jealousy, and the ability to receive his guests. This lover of pomp and display, this southerner (whose behaviour was later described by an Emperor of the French as that of a handsome fencing-master), possessed to a high degree a knowledge of the treatment of women; as did all experienced sensuous natures of the time, he combined skepticism with the pathos of desire; he was, in short, the right partner for women of the type of Térézia and Josephine and had also the indispensable requisite for such an intimacy: a considerable position, and a certain assurance which promised a still higher one.

Barras had in his youth been an officer and, being in debt, had emigrated to the colonies. He was possessed of a sincere, unruly, rebellious spirit, which caused him to feel the outbreak of revolu-

tion as a personal affair. But it was a long way from the storming of the Bastille to the world after Thermidor — and the rebellion of youth does not make the revolutionist. This Barras, whose friend Josephine became, was president of the Convention, a member of all important committees, and Commander-in-Chief of the insular armies. He had suppressed resistance against the fall of the last truly revolutionary group, coming, meanwhile, closer to being a calloused Vicomte of the most recent *ancien régime* than one who had attacked the Bastille. He was not yet the powerful member of the Directory; he did not yet strut about in the costume — long ago bought from the royalists — which had been discarded by the former “ regicide ” David — the wide red coat with the lace collar, the Roman side-sword, the hat laden with plumes. However, he did now allow people to address him by the title of General; he clattered a trailing sabre, and, unmindful of the fact that he returned from his missions to the revolutionary armies without military glory, yet with his pockets filled with money by the army contractors, he pretended, in expectation of further finery, to be excessively warlike. But, unlike Alexandre Beauharnais, all this pretence left him when great audiences vanished; and his pompous wit, together with his experienced sense of enjoyment, made him a popular host and dinner-guest at the parties which he loved so well.

Barras had not reached the age at which the freshness of youth is more necessary for erotic pleasures than a definite charm; he was not a worn-out old man to whom the dangerous illusion begins only with a maiden’s body. Josephine’s mobile face, the charming contrast of her *air de gamine*, the studied languor in her dark-blue eyes with the long, curved lashes, delighted him; his enjoyment extended even to the arts which enhanced the effects of her face, now no longer young. The dull, ivory-like smoothness of the still taut skin, the well-rounded, exposed bosom, the naturally curly hair — according to the light that fell on it, sometimes blond, sometimes

dark — pleased him quite as well as the marked cunning of Josephine's dress, which was like her conversation, unconventional and mysterious.

That this relationship, which started immediately at the zenith, lasted a much longer time than was usual with Barras is greatly to Josephine's credit. She understood, as she never did before or after, the content and limitations of the unspoken pact, kept strictly to it, and did not once indulge in any of her foolish escapades, which were doubly dangerous because of the position of refinement which she assumed. She enjoyed without illusion whatever doses of the erotic drug were given her, made no idol of Barras, dreamed of no future with him, took what he was willing to give, passed over his undisguised adventures with a charming and assumed sulkiness, and moreover was wise enough not to try any adventure of her own in order to see how Barras, who always boasted that he was not jealous, would take it. Thus her choice continually proved to be a better one. He was even-tempered and well-behaved to her; he admitted that after his long contact with the rabble he felt an especial joy in his own good manners. Besides this he was in the year of his ascendancy (which Térézia had very definitely foretold) and he was so busy that he could not see Josephine very often; hence their meetings wore rather more of a social than an intimate aspect. He was generous, both with his own resources and in pointing out others upon which she could draw. And, as he was increasingly successful that year, ever widening streams of money flowed toward him. Josephine had done quite well, for the year 1795 was a time of famine in everything. In the first months of it she had been an almost daily guest at the house of Madame de Moulin, who spent considerable money and energy in the feeding of her friends and who excused Josephine from the necessity of bringing her own bread. Shortly thereafter she could herself offer sumptuous hospitality from the basketfuls of delicacies of all kinds sent by Barras.

She rented the country-house in Croissy in which she had so frequently been a guest before her imprisonment, and every week she received Barras there and the crowds that came with him. Pasquier, who later became Chancellor of France, says in his memoirs: "We had Madame de Beauharnais as a neighbour. Her house was close to ours. She seldom came there, only once a week, and then only in order to receive Barras and the numerous company he had in attendance. From early morning we saw the baskets arrive, full of food. . . . The house of Madame de Beauharnais had, as was so often the custom with Creole women, a certain luxury of arrangement, but with all the superfluous things there was a lack of the most necessary ones. Fowl, game, and rare fruit filled the kitchen in over-abundance — we were then in the midst of the greatest famine — but at the same time there were not enough cooking-utensils, glasses, or plates; so these were always borrowed from our scanty household."

As far as Barras's generosity, of which Josephine boasted so much, is concerned, the results show either that she overestimated it incredibly or that her demands grew with a truly tropical speed which — when one thinks of the debts that mounted from month to month — was out of all proportion to either his ability or his desire to keep pace with it. In that year, 1795, which a contemporary calls the year of famine, dancing, and luxury, Josephine thoroughly acquired the cleverness of a true profiteer: she learned that money has to be spent if more is to be had; that from debts arise importance, and again from this importance comes new credit, through the hope of final settlement. Barras had effected the return of Alexandre's confiscated estates — but these brought at first nothing but a little credit; a larger loan was granted by her friend the banker from Dunkirk on a draft made upon Martinique. The Republic, represented by Tallien and Barras, supplied horses and a carriage, in return for Alexandre's requisitioned vehicle; all this

helped, yet obligated her at the same time. Josephine was like the man who had a coat made for the one button he found. For a carriage meant also a coachman and stables, and since there were no stables to the place at Croissy, a whole new house had to be taken. And Josephine, in debt even to her servants as well as to purveyors of all kinds, quickly found a house which could support the new equipage and also her own ever increasing and colourful half-mourning and the circle of friends which she had begun to choose from her wide acquaintanceship.

The house in the rue Chantereine (which shortly, through connexion with this new tenant, was to have an entirely different name), this little palace standing between court and garden, had neither the style, the location, nor the past of an abode of nobility; it was rather the sort of establishment which smart unattached women who intend to rise by their personal qualifications are wont to dream of. Such characteristics (although very soon thoroughly changed) in the beginning still clung to the house from its old lessee, the divorced wife of an actor who was later called the great Talma. Whether the first advance instalment of the rent, considered extraordinarily high even for those times, came from Barras or from one of Josephine's other quickly opened and as quickly shut-off sources of income is unimportant; the sum was paid, and even the expense of a few now necessary acquisitions was defrayed immediately. Josephine possessed some beautiful pieces of furniture, but not nearly enough to fill all the rooms of the house. Hence with what means or, rather, credit she had she bought the pieces necessary to furnish all the reception-rooms. Later, when Josephine, having more money at her disposal, completed the decorations, it was seen that most of the furniture and utensils bought at the start did not at all correspond with her ever more fastidious taste, so that they had to make room for others, more expensive. Characteristically, the only two rooms which were perfect from the very begin-

ning were the bedroom and the dressing-room. Here were mirrors of every size and shape, and the "work-table," that rich arsenal of toilet accessories, with its crucibles, phials, rouges, and crayons, whose use Josephine gradually and masterfully acquired. Fortunately, the practice of these arts to the aid of beauty had become general, as, apparently, it does in all times of far-reaching change in social order, when women (usually in surplus) are forced, by using every female trick, to secure for themselves individual masculine protection which has been taken from them by the disappearance of fortunes and the loss of refuge inherent in position and family.

So Josephine now had her house, and the fact that in all its splendour — as a contemporary memoir points out — the bed was the outstandingly magnificent piece of furniture doubtless hardly entered the consciousness of its mistress. Rather, she was, above all, impressed with the idea that a house was a social necessity. And although there may have been, as at Croissy, an insufficiency of kitchen utensils and other unapparent requirements of a household (it was a pity to spend money for such things), care was taken, at any rate, from the beginning to have a staff of pompous servants. Besides the coachman for the black Hungarian horses, there was a gardener, a good cook, and a new lady's-maid — thus quickly making five. This number was just sufficient, because the children were not in the house. Hortense was away at a newly built girls' boarding-school, whose tone was rather that of the old nobility than of the new democracy. Eugène, who had not been left very long in Hoche's care, was also in an educational institution and, like his sister, came only on vacations to the rue Chantereine. Much as Josephine may have been attached to her children, the new house was no place for them. Not that Barras laid any great claim to her — on the contrary, in a growing mutual cordiality the love-affair gradually flickered out; and Josephine, now "one of the ladies of

Barras's household," saw her friend alone only when she needed something from him. But she was having the little fragment of worldly glitter which she had longed for — and it was hard on her. She had not the position of Térézia, whose obvious splendour, in the face of Tallien's rapidly shrinking power, depended on the firm support of Ouvrard's millions. Josephine was now thirty-three years old; sometimes she looked with fearful eyes into her mirror; very often creditors became impatient and had to be pacified with new expenditures. And this whole "position" rested on nothing but her social gifts, her definite charm, and a determination to hold on to what at least she had. For a woman lazy by nature this would have been an almost unbearable task, had it not been made up of so many pleasant details.



CHAPTER SIX



“ARRANGEMENTS”

On s'arrange” is a term frequently used by the French to denote the human reduction of events of every kind to a formula. It is the answer of the millions who, grain upon grain, seek to repair each catastrophe to the ant-hill and who, in the end, become almost accustomed to the destruction. Once, in a creative hour, there comes to mankind a good or evil genius who ruptures the formula; then the millions hurry to adapt themselves to it, to “arrange” things. But when the unbearable tension of “great times” abates, they hasten to subscribe to the tragedy in which they have played, the farce, the piece after their own hearts, and leave government — until another good or evil genius forces another break — to those who understand it, who adapt themselves to the affairs of state just as they themselves do to the affairs of life.

A young officer without employment, who in the year 1795 was trying to approach all the new powers in Paris, wrote thus to his brother: “The time of terror is now recollected only as if it had been a dream.” And in another letter: “Luxury, pleasure, and the arts are again taking hold here in an astonishing way. . . . The carriages and the smart people again reappear, as if from a long dream in which they had never ceased to glisten. Everyone unites to find diversion and to make life agreeable. Memory is torn com-

pletely away — for in all this application of mind and in this whirlwind of activity how can one look on the dark side? Women are everywhere — in the plays, on the boulevards, in the library. Even in the workshop of the scientist one meets very pretty women. Of all places in the world this is the only one where they really deserve to have the helm. And the men are mad about them; they think only of them and live only for and around them. A woman need be in Paris only six months to learn what she is entitled to and what is her sphere of power. . . .”

When one adds that the writer of this letter, Napoleon Buonaparte — discharged artillery officer, then only twenty-six years old — was by nature the enemy of all such pleasant adaptability, the power of this new atmosphere of comfort can easily be estimated from its effect on the gloomy young man. The fact that the incongruous cheerfulness, amid a surrounding activity so forgetful of the past, was soon followed by a stiff reaction expressed by adherents of the military caste — Hoche, for instance, after a brief participation in the feasts of “this great harem Paris” — does not as yet belong here; for really this young General was mentioned and introduced simply as a narrator who, coming from the still heroic France of the great soldierly association of men, saw Paris as “*où on s’arrange si parfaitement avec tout.*”

There is a whole library of reports, memoirs, letters, and notations of all kinds concerning the now newly formed Directory — and although Josephine is mentioned in many of them, we must abstain from extensive quotation; for the Paris of those days is so thoroughly close and intelligible to everyone who has lived through post-war times in any of the larger German cities that its atmosphere can be recalled in a few words. Something has already been said of the misery which existed side by side with luxury. The letter of Buonaparte, above quoted, refers to the role of woman, by whom, specifically, he must have, first of all, meant Térézia, for it was to

her he addressed himself for aid in obtaining a new uniform, as his old one, amid all the splendour round about, looked too plain and shabby. Familiar parallels can be obtained when one thinks of the short hairdress of the beautiful Térézia (which only a little time before had been called *à la victime*, but was now known as the Titus head), when the fashion plates are remembered, with their long, closely cut dresses, underneath which almost nothing was worn, and when one reads that women, when sitting down, took great care that their stockingless legs should be amply visible. The masculinity of these aggressive women is of a piece with the effeminacy of the men who were their natural partners, men completely without jealousy, who were smooth and experienced in lies and duplicity (as, for example, Barras; but behind him, still more smooth, glistening, and dangerous, appeared beasts like Talleyrand). Who does not recognize in these beardless and somewhat effeminate figures — remaining youthful until they were old men — a certain type of our own time? Or, rather, one of the two leading classes of men who naturally arise during and following great crises in humanity: one whose members really do not mature sufficiently to become men, because they are not able to reach the place where they can stand alone, but are supported by the established combination of position, family, property, and morale. In contrast with this species, which is forced by the ever present necessity for self-defence and which practises the principle of adaptation, there is that other class which has attained in camp and on the battle-field an early matured fortitude which, in keeping pure the conceptions that have elsewhere become mere empty sounds — honour, duty, and comradeship — has created for itself the values upon which companionship and union may rest.¹ Is it not easy to catch the feeling

¹ It seems that the "innate" military sense in mankind is a trick of nature to get rid of, by wars, the unnecessary surplus of men. Besides, it would appear that the temporary presence of a highly developed military caste leads (as in several species of ants) to the rise of a kind of active neuter. Opposed to this, in such times, there

of unity among the “ radical ” youth both of today and of all time which urges it on to great alliances — to recognize from such indications a little of the atmosphere, no matter what the difference of costume or decorum?

Paris, thus, was in the midst of adapting herself and really went so far as to view every recrudescence of “ loyalty to old customs ” with sympathy, even in the face of the established Republic. While Tallien, now deep in the mire, brought forth indispensable Roman explanations, already dim, for the entirely unjustifiable slaughter of the many hundreds of royalists who had surrendered at Quiberon, the beautiful Térézia became indignant; and in other drawing-rooms than the one in the rue Chantereine, where the tone was again aristocratic, disapproval was the fashion. This, to be sure, did not prevent Josephine from being greatly gratified to have, a few months later, “ the blood-dripping Tallien ” on her side in an affair of some importance. Then, indeed, the hope of the royalists had decidedly faded, and the sans-culotte women of 1794 again favoured a limited republic and a “ bird in hand.”

Since she had her house, Josephine was careful to ask to her, at such times as she was not herself asked out, the “ intimates ” who came of leading families. These were men of middle age or older (some with very good names, such as Coulaincourt, Montesquiou, and Ségur); in such company she enjoyed a revival of the past, the past in which she had actually played so small a part. In conversation with these men, who, attracted by her charm, were happy to be together in a pleasant house and at a well-set table, she fared as did Barras with the women of the old society: she practised with subtle shading an attitude which she had learned only by watching and listening and which she now suddenly employed, as one might

springs up a polygamous variety of man, which finds itself in the same relation to the excess of women as the males of certain antelope groups around whom gather flocks of a hundred and more females.

who passes immediately from the multiplication-table to calculus. She was again the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais; she enjoyed the homage and respect of her dinner-guests, and if there was a modicum of liberality, of excellently veiled daring, well, that amused her; she thought it right and in good tone. In this circle little was said of Barras or Tallien, although almost everyone in it had profited to some degree from those two enjoyable persons, who did things on such a grand scale. One was among royalists, talked as such, forgot that adaptation to the change had already begun, and waited for the return of great times and of the lord and master. It never entered the heads of the still alluring Widow Beauharnais and her table-companions that the next lord and master could possibly be other than a descendant of the sainted Louis.

Besides these acquaintances who served as a tie to an imaginary past, Josephine zealously kept up her connexions with the present. Before all, there was the still thriving, although circumstantially changed, friendship with Barras, the helpful Barras, to whom, when she had not seen him for some time, she sent intimate notes which ended with elaborate embraces. Also, of course, there was the contact with Madame Tallien, who "from a political power became ever a more mundane one." At this time she wrote to Aunt Renaudin (who finally, in the late quiet years of Fontainebleau, had achieved her life's aim and had become the Marquise de Beauharnais): "Madame Tallien is both beautiful and kind and makes use of her enormous influence to obtain privileges for the unhappy people who turn to her, and with all she has such an air of gratification toward what she bestows that you would believe she were herself the debtor. Her friendship for me is tender and full of resources. I assure you I feel for her as I do for you; this will give you a conception of my regard for Madame Tallien. . . ."

Josephine visited the old people at Fontainebleau frequently; and it can be said generally that one of her outstanding attributes

was a deep attachment for all those who had been kind to her (so long as they were not her lovers). Her memory, which later proved so flexible and so indulgent when it dealt with recollections hard to fit into a new style of life, became more and more an excellent instrument which indelibly recorded each acquaintance and registered loyally every benefit received. It was certainly a memory ever busy.

For with a tireless activity, which stood as the most remarkable contrast to the impression of “ pining lassitude and tired charm ” which she was able to produce, she continued to accept every invitation, often staying out past daybreak, until finally she knew almost all the people whose acquaintance was worth having, and many others. And beside Madame Récamier, with the objective, unobtrusive cult of her own gentle beauty; beside the sensible and industrious Madame de Staël, whose cunning snobbishness employed all the gift of organization inherited from her father, Necker, in the administration of her friendships, which encircled all Europe; beside Térézia Tallien, who gave as liberally as she received, and who still availed herself of the legend which had arisen from the already forgotten facts of the 9th Thermidor for the distinctive mode of her dress; beside all these the everywhere present and still lovely-looking Creole, with the languid expression in her dark-blue eyes, her unsurpassed gift for listening, and the lovable courtesy which helped to make her doubtful reputation unquestionably alluring, finally attained the significant social position to which she had aspired. She was up to her neck in debts; every day she had to exert a shrewd and unscrupulous skill (with which at the present day one could easily become a great prospector) to calm all her creditors with money obtained from other creditors or with securities; she charmed every man she met, got along well enough with the women, and was always the lovely Beauharnais, whom one saw everywhere, about whom one talked much and whispered more, but always without malice. And if, some morning, her reflection in the mirror

had not happened to strike her too coldly in the midst of life, she would gratefully have chosen this joyful present for the whole of her future existence. But there was always another glance in the mirror, in the many mirrors of her dressing-room, which, to be sure, showed her body, in spite of motherhood, still faultless and taut, but which also showed — especially after the too long and lively nights — a certain want of freshness, a little flabbiness around the mouth and eyes and, what was worse, around the neck. And now a new annoyance appeared, in spite of all the care taken; her teeth, which had been so exquisitely white, began to discolour, to turn brownish here and there; and none of the expensive physicians or quacks could give her any effective advice. Her smile, which had been so delightful, became tired and embarrassed; she practised in her mirror a smile which did not show her teeth. She began to spend much time before these truthful, heartless mirrors. It was fortunate that it had become a matter of course for all smart women (and those who wished to appear so) to assist nature with a great deal of artifice, to paint arbitrarily an alluring picture. Josephine acquired great skill in perfecting her make-up; perhaps too much, for a few malevolent beholders began to suspect behind the alluring mask far worse devastation than was actually there. But when at times the effort to find money, on which, indeed, this whole “ position ” was founded, became too difficult, and the bills and creditors’ letters accumulated beyond their usual number, Josephine suddenly let drop the hand with the rouge, the crayon, and the powder-puff and, shivering, saw in the mirror a distorted image: five years, ten years later, the future. . . . She was now in her thirty-third year.



CHAPTER SEVEN



“CE DRÔLE DE
BONAPARTE”¹

The law of simultaneous action and reaction is modified in its political aspect in that the reaction enters with full force at the time when the action, having reached its aim, begins to lose its vital impact and idea. As long as revolution, embodied in mighty brains and will-power, had been to France a great, fermenting life-force, pursuing new forms, what little there remained of monarchy stalked ghostlike in the nights. And those who were still able to feed with expectant reality the bled monster, for whom it was easier to die than to live, those surviving Bourbons and the other émigrés, acted

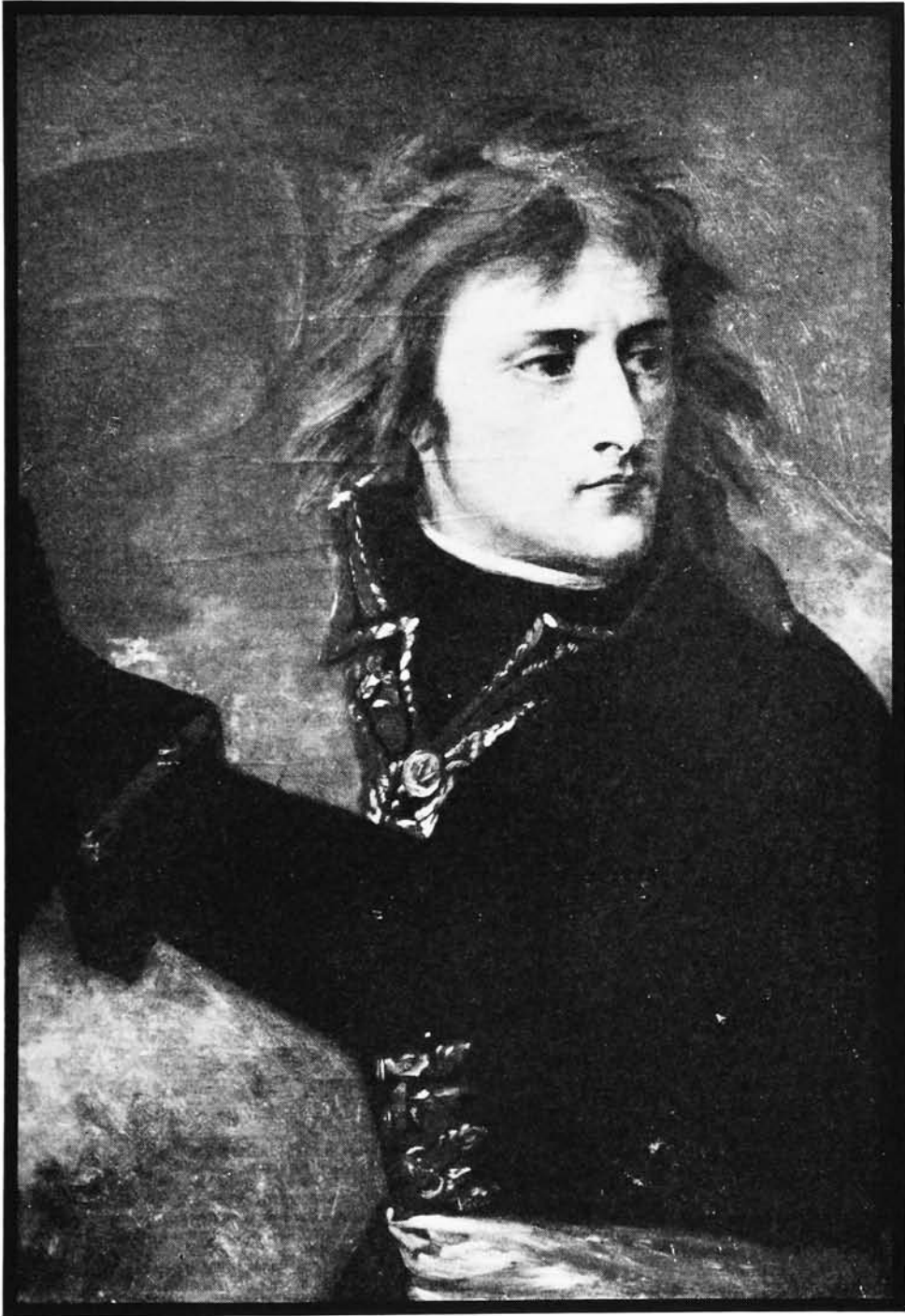
¹ In the face of an age whose hero-worship is drawn from as many murky sources as its hero-damnation, it is far from easy to approach the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte. It is best, perhaps, to sustain a well-documented objectivity, keeping in mind the three disquieting volumes of Th. Iung's (Jung's) *Bonaparte et son temps*, with all their irrefutable reports of swindle and lying, and the gruesome Fellahin murders in Egypt; also those of other authors who picture the senseless and horrible slaughter of men, the squandering of life, and the denial of freedom to a newly liberated nation; but into it all comes the enormously beautiful vision of the indestructible genius of that youth, which is terminated in the death-mask. Into this dilemma, however, enters the realization that this story is not of Napoleon, but rather of the woman whose life became “worthy of biography” because of its connexions with him. In addition to this, the author is confident that every thinking person has come to an understanding of that phenomenon Napoleon Bonaparte, just as he has with all the other great phenomena of human existence. Thus the author is content to relate simply Josephine's share in Napoleon's life, assured that each reader will add to the facts and interpretation his own conception of the man.

with arrogance and stupidity: held court, intrigued, paraded militantly, and showed a miserable inability to eliminate themselves from the life-current of France. (Whoever wishes to understand the role of the émigré in the first seven years of the Revolution, with its effect on the inner French monarchism, can do no better than read in the third volume of the *Mémoires de Sainte-Hélène* the long report of Count Las Cases on his life during that period.)

But when, in spite of all this, the Republic, barely yet secure, threatened to go over, without any intermediary stage, from the hands of the men who had been heroic defenders of its idea into the hands of the opportunists — the lovers of power — there arose in Paris itself a reaction far more dangerous than that in the Vendée or of the Chouans: a reaction of the half- and quarter-revolutionists who, in view of all the corruption, preferred to revert to the old, tried order. But what really carried the rebellion, which the royalists had hoped to turn to their own good uses, into the broader streams of the population in general was the fact that the Constitution, drafted by the retiring Convention, deprived them of all hope of seeing the succeeding government composed entirely of new men.

The government of France now moved “from riot to riot.” One of these, that of the 13th Vendémiaire, is here touched upon because of its connexion with the task of this description. The fact that on this 5th of October there was not a complete overthrow is due to the work of the man who, in accomplishing the feat, entered into great history, met Josephine, and carried her along unawares.

When, on the 12th Vendémiaire, the Convention, threatened by more than three quarters of the National Guard, put its entire hope on the clattering sabre of Barras, he suddenly felt that he cared very little for military honours at a time when a blunder might cost him his position, his future, or even his life. But it was certain that someone, who might be equal to it, would have to undertake the



BONAPARTE AT THE BRIDGE OF ARCOLA, IN 1796
Painting by Antoine Jean Gros, in the Louvre

responsibility of the honourable mission — a soldier, an organizer, a man who, with the few thousand troops at his disposal, would be able to resist the infinitely superior forces. There was no time to lose. A few generals were mentioned to Barras. One of them awoke in him the recollection of a delicate, undersized young man with a pale, yellowish, fanatical face; the one who had asked Térézia not so long ago for a new uniform. The face was not to Barras's taste; he did not like fanatics any longer; but this little Corsican (Bonaparte was his name) was the fellow who had so cleverly erected the batteries at Toulon, and he looked as if he could get what he wanted. Such a one was needed now. Barras sent for him.

Bonaparte was born in Corsica at the time of its capture by the French. When his father, who exerted himself endlessly in petitions and journeys on behalf of his large family, finally secured for him a scholarship at the French military academy, Napoleon did not even know the language, and for many years he made his handwriting illegible in order to cover his faulty spelling. Clumsy and wild, scoffed at by the sleek Parisians, destitute, always with teeth tightly clenched, he passed his boyhood and early youth learning how to tell white and purposeful lies, and consoling himself with hopes for a future which should recompense him. But this future, with its poor second-lieutenant's salary, which he, moreover, shared with his younger brother, promised little more than the miserable past. He had hardly any friends, women were inaccessible, and the only blessings which in the dark days of waiting furnished light and luxury — books — were to be had only by difficult privations. Then he tried his luck in his native Corsica. But any hope for rapid advancement in the muddle there soon vanished; and when his family, threatened and robbed of its few possessions, were compelled to flee the island, Bonaparte seriously began to think of France. His first chance came at Toulon; to its release from the British he contributed brilliantly. At twenty-five years of age he was made a brigadier-

general, but only a short time afterwards that title became empty and useless and without pay. For he had become too closely connected with the Jacobins, too friendly with Robespierre's brothers and sisters; and the famous letter which declared that if he had recognized the traitor, he would have been the first to sink the dagger into his heart helped him very little in the end. After his release from prison he wandered through Paris, finally obtaining a reappointment, but as infantry brigadier. This did not attract him. With innumerable petitions filled with false allegations, and doctors' reports which he himself solicited, he continually postponed his departure for his post, waiting for the miracle that would not come. Then there arose in him a dream, which was — as were all his dreams of that time — sharply outlined from the beginning and thoroughly related to fact: a dream of the Orient of Alexander the Great, clothed in the faith of his knowledge as artillery officer — to reorganize the Turkish artillery and to find for himself in that country, which would very soon be no more strange to him than France had been not so long before, the lever for his “*Δός μοι πῆ στῶ καὶ τὴν γῆν κινήρω.*” In expectation of his summons to Turkey, after many efforts and petitions, he found a haven in the topographic office of the Ministry of War, which guaranteed his salary without necessitating his transfer to the infantry. Here he gave shape to several practical dreams which had come to him during his service in the army of the south-east — specifically, in the preparation of plans for a campaign against Upper Italy. And so, while he was awaiting the call to Turkey, as Cromwell once had waited for the departure of the emigrant ship to America, Barras's order reached him. It was perhaps the great chance! But Bonaparte remembered his experiences with this Convention and was filled with hesitation. For all his expressed political opinions, though he may personally have been rebellious against the old régime, he really was interested only in himself, in the movements which

would lead him into the orbit of his star. Now came this offer: to command an army, although a small one; to be subject to no one in his decisions; to undertake a great adventure. That was what attracted him, not the aim. He asked for time to consider. Barras's hands were shaky, like those of a gambler who holds a decisive card. Bonaparte did not weigh the chances of success, he thought only of the size of the possible reward. Poor, chaste, frugal in food and drink, like all young southerners of spiritual race, he saw these men before him — Barras, Tallien, and their clique, who had devised a constitution which would guarantee them continuance of power under new names and titles. He saw them and felt himself a match for them. And the others? Theirs was but a dull or miserable fermentation, with which it was easy to compete, but from whose aims he was for the moment excluded, as a compromised Jacobin. He hesitated no longer — after all, was Turkey not still left?

And then the night of this 13th Vendémiaire, and the day. In half an hour Bonaparte had all his information. There was a young cavalry officer at hand, spruce and trimly dressed, whose name was Murat and who still looked like a disguised clerk, which, allegedly, he had been. Napoleon considered him useful and sent him to capture the forty cannon upon whose possession everything depended. This Murat snatched the guns from under the very nose of the advancing National Guardsmen and brought them to Paris. With unprecedented rapidity they were set in position, covering quays and bridges. Then came the attack of the superior forces exactly at the points foreseen; grape-shot was fired into the jammed-up ranks, which kept swelling, until, disbanded, they retreated, leaving piles of dead. Then finally the disarming of the rebels — victory — victory for Barras and the Convention. What Bonaparte himself thought of this engagement the words directed to his aide-de-camp and friend express: “If those fellows [the royalists] had put me at their head, how I would have shot down the representatives of

the people!" And this time he was not forgotten. General of a division; first provisional, then fully empowered Commander-in-Chief of the inland army. A few months before, he had had to beg to obtain a uniform, and, on seeing the elegant, smart young men who sat beside wonderful women in carriages, he had expressed as a most daring wish the hope that he too might be allowed to ride in such a phaeton. Now he was established in the Palace of the Commander in the rue Neuve-des-Capucines, had carriages and horses, servants, and aides-de-camp who carried out his orders and was a power, a power. And to the houses where, only a short time before, he had been a bashful petitioner, he was now invited as a matter of course (even deemed an "impressive" guest). He came and went in Barras's home, sat among the pretty women who had seemed so inaccessible, talked, tried even to joke in an excited, bewildered way, found amused and interested listeners among these women in whose midst he loved to be; he inhaled their perfume while he talked paradoxically, childishly, like one possessed.

About ten years later a legend was current which is told and believed even today, a legend started by its chief actor, who put the story down in the neat and affectionate memoirs he invented around his family. Eugène Beauharnais, who was then fifteen years old, credited himself with a heroic boy's trick, which was supposed to have brought General Bonaparte and Josephine together. He wrote what had been related to him: that after the rebellion of the 13th Vendémiaire a general disarmament was ordered, in consequence of which the sword of Alexandre Beauharnais was said to have been taken away from the rue Chantereine. That then he, Eugène himself, went on his own responsibility to the Commander-in-Chief, Bonaparte, and with tearful, flashing eyes requested the return of his father's sword. And that Bonaparte, who was himself a good son, touched by the filial love and courage of the good-looking youth, ordered the return of the weapon. That Josephine,

during a visit which she made to express her appreciation of the kindness, invited the obviously impressed young General to her house. What definitely refutes this pretty legend is the fact that there really was no widespread disarmament after the 13th Vendémiaire and that whatever of it did take place applied chiefly to firearms, and hardly to the dainty officers' swords of the royalist régime, such as Alexandre carried.

Bonaparte himself, as do many other reliable contemporaries, tells that he met Josephine for the first time at the house of Barras. In the various reports of this first meeting the dress which Josephine was wearing is often described: it was of white India muslin, and its exaggerated width enveloped her body like a cloud. The loosely folded bodice was fastened over the shoulders by two enamelled lions' heads; the short pleated sleeves covered only a part of her beautiful arms, on which she wore gold bracelets.

Josephine showed the “saviour of the Convention,” of whom Barras and the others had talked so much, an interest mixed with amusement. “*Ce drôle de Bonaparte,*” as she some time later called him in a letter, was certainly peculiar enough. Not that there was anything of the upstart in him (one had gradually become accustomed to that in those times); there was simply something peculiar about him. This began with his appearance: he was neither definitely handsome nor homely. Then his clothes: the new uniform of the division general, although tolerably well cut, looked as if he had not grown into it. In the house of Madame Permon, who, as his countrywoman, was kindly disposed toward him, he was called Puss-in-Boots. The passionate, sad wildness of his humble youth, with its refuge in remote realities — which were world-sick realities of the soul, not powerless, impotent day-dreams — clung to him along with the burning chastity of his long years of waiting. Now an enormous step had been taken in his process of personal vindication; but with it the inner tension had

grown, and the young man with the straight, long hair falling to his shoulders, and the alarming, passionate, gloomy look of an unruly child, took this tension along with him into the yearned-for conversation of good company. He astonished and attracted, and was always a little ridiculous with his boundless vivacity. Often sudden rapturous ideas, or keen observations which were almost clever, protruded — but these were always without the saving humour which would have made them bearable or would have fitted them into the conversation.

In the beginning the young General was almost intoxicated by all women. But while the sensually experienced men around him, who in their lust were unable to concentrate, sometimes chose one or another of them, since it was impossible to have all at the same time, Napoleon's instincts drove him to take quickly one woman who would personify the entire sex for him. He was no pilferer; in the affairs of love he was a high-school-boy novice. And he was a member of an iron-bound family, which outlasted all separations; the son of a severe, old-fashioned mother, of whose affection he had been deprived, but who, he knew, expected the continuance of clan leadership from one of her sons; he was this mother's darling, hardened in solitude, in a wild world of eternal guerrilla warfare, in which the family is the battle- and offence-unit. To all this he was tied by an affection unaltered by experience, and by fetters which in his alien solitude had become chains. To belong to such a clan meant to remain inextricably in a narrow solar system, either as a light-giving sun or as a satellite. Whatever Bonaparte may have imagined for himself in his grasping, egotistic, unfantastic dreams, the clan, the mother, the many brothers and sisters were always included therein. Thus the awakening of his young manhood took this symbolic form: love as the passion of a member of the Bonapartes, and at the same time an egoistic desire to draw the longed-for woman immediately into the Bonaparte circle.

When his older brother Joseph, "the lucky fellow," had married

in Marseilles the daughter of the soap-dealer Clary, Napoleon had chosen for himself at their very first meeting his young sister-in-law, Désirée (who later, by grace of another, became a queen), not for an intrigue or for sensual pastime, but for marriage and coexistence in the world of the Bonapartes. Refused and in the long separation forgotten as a somewhat foolish brother-in-law with no prospects, young Bonaparte, the suddenly dismissed Brigadier-General, tried the first woman in whose house in Paris he gained admission, Madame Permon (whose daughter subsequently became that Duchesse d'Abrantès who has preserved such invaluable material in her memoirs). Madame Permon, who like himself was a Corsican, claiming descent from the imperial family of the Komnens, had been a friend of Charles de Buonaparte, the father, and was, indeed, nearer to him in age than to the son who now in all seriousness wooed her (and she had but shortly been widowed); wooed her as for a mother-lover in whose house and circle he could become, as is the way of the clan, the young patriarch. When she also refused him, this longing for a home, this desire for house and issue, sat silent in misery and waited. When it again arose, it attached itself to a woman who, as the object for such passion, appears no less strange to us than the suitor himself must have been to her in the beginning.

Napoleon Bonaparte tells — in the years when life had become a continual staring through bars at the past, in St. Helena — of the first meeting: “I was not indifferent to the charms of women, but until then they had not spoiled me, and my character rendered me shy in their presence. Madame de Beauharnais was the first who gave me a sense of security. One day I was sitting near her, and she said flattering things about my military achievements. This praise intoxicated me, I devoted myself to her uninterruptedly, I followed her everywhere — I was passionately in love with her. And our acquaintances already knew what I did not dare tell her. . . .”

Josephine was, according to the very youthful idea of the times,

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a great deal older than Napoleon; she had been widowed in a most tragic way; she had children; this was, indeed, the only motherly thing about her which could entice the family quixotism of the young man. But there were many other allurements: the ceaselessly changing play of being the lady or the languishing Creole, the sudden exciting vivacity in conversation, the sweet, girlish, melancholy need for protection, or, again, the altogether intimidating cleverness. But then, who does not know the arts of smart women, by which they pay each man the compliment most exactly suited to him? And who has not, at least in his youth, built hurried hopes on such charming and unobligating civilities, when, in the uncertain self-consciousness of youth, he felt himself elated, not realizing that the "fashionable treatment of men" was not meant for himself alone. And is it not always at such times that a man, though he have a creative dream of the world as his life-centre and be as wise and mature as the old Goethe, who was also not "clever," becomes credulous through longing and more easily duped than he who "takes life as it comes"?

The alluring Vicomtesse, with her sweet nonchalance and her dangerous politeness, bewitched this young man of whom people talked so much, first without any special intention, only, so to speak, for a reserve; she really never had known such an odd man; then (there were gradually so many different reasons) because he truly was somebody who could be used and who, in the expectation of further power, could provide her with many little conveniences, as, for instance, boxes at the theatre and the like. Josephine, to be sure, did not understand that the young man was a perfect ignoramus at the rules of the game of love, which had risen to such refinement, or that he possessed an unbelievable gift (usually given only to animals, children, or geniuses) for taking things in earnest. "The women of Paris are very flirtatious," Hoche had written after his parting from Josephine; Bonaparte, who was of the same age,

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called, in his boyishly beating heart, this amused, curious, coquetry his “miracle” — and snatched with both greedy hands at the cup from which he received, like the others, a few drops. And Josephine invited him to the rue Chantreine, allowed him to accompany her to the theatre and to balls, and let him take her home again. If his duties or a burning fear of his ungovernable longings kept him away for a few days, she wrote him a letter underneath whose insignificant rebuke there sounded a little enticing note of love, which completely inflamed him. And then one night she took him along into the room which had the blue nankeen covers from Guadeloupe on the furniture, the room with the many mirrors and the large bed. Why? From curiosity? To comply with an unbelievable and entirely wild amorousness? From desire for an adventure which promised a little dose of the love-drug? Simply from a whim? Or in order to chain this ever more influential man to herself? Any reason may have been hidden in this hardly careless gesture, in this liberty of a sensual woman, who in such a night hour pushes aside her many little worrying thoughts to make way for the one secure defence which guards the ego: the reserve.



## CHAPTER EIGHT



# COMMON SENSE!

*Il y a des portes étranges par lesquelles on entre dans l'Histoire.*

The friendship of Napoleon and Josephine began after the events of Vendémiaire, which had raised him from the level of the many young generals of the Republic to “one who counted.” Hardly three weeks later there is the following note from Josephine to her new friend:

“You no longer come to see a friend who loves you; you have left her entirely; that is wrong, for she is affectionately attached to you.

“Come tomorrow, Septidi,<sup>1</sup> to my house for breakfast; I must see you and talk about your affairs. Good night, my friend, I embrace you.

WIDOW BEAUHARNAIS ”

To talk about his affairs? How dangerously clever! What tempts a young, ambitious man more than the opportunity to speak of his hopes and desires, his problems and plans, in the knowledge that the woman with whom he is in love will listen thoughtfully to him? The highly ambitious naturally wish to share their projects, and love doubles the dreams concerning the imagined ability in dream-sharing of the loved one. Such a youth sees and loves in his

<sup>1</sup> The seventh in the ten-day chronological unit which in the republican calendar took the place of the week.



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listener that longed-for world which was burned into form in his lonely youth; he gives her his proud belief with his love and draws the world of his loved one, which he thinks great and worthy, into himself, into his ego, which has as yet no other guarantee but his own existence and which besides the dream world, which has always been taken for granted, now craves facts, many, many facts.

Torn from all hard-borne experience, Napoleon now reached for Josephine, for the beautiful, fragrant lady in the expensive raiment, for the charming woman who encouraged him, only to slip away laughingly with playful artifice; for the Vicomtesse in whom the wrecked world bloomed for him in all the allure of knowing youth. He reached out for her, took hold, wanted to keep, possess, have — but then, with the next word, the sleek lady again slipped away from him into a life he did not understand, into a humour he did not wish to share. Already embraces, the raptures of sensual delight, were forgotten as if they had never occurred. He burned, held out his hands to emptiness, became deeply offended, no longer understood anything, wished to have and to hold, again snatched with hand and word, was enamoured and bewildered. On a morning following a night of love he wrote this letter:

“ As I left you, I took a painful feeling with me. I went very sadly to bed. It seemed to me that the respect due my character should have kept you from the thought which aroused you so much last night. If such a thought prevails in your mind, you will be unfair, madame, and I very unhappy. How could you have believed that I did not love you for your own sake? For whose sake, then? Oh, madame, have I changed so much? Has such a low feeling been able to find a place in such a pure soul? I am still astonished, but indeed less at that than at the feeling which on awakening has again forced me to prostrate myself at your feet, without rancour and without will. Truly, it is impossible to be weaker or more humbled. What is your rare power, incomparable Josephine? One

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of your thoughts poisons my life and tears at my heart with completely opposed desires; but a stronger feeling, a less gloomy mood, lays hold on me again, takes me back, guides me like one guilty. I am satisfied that, when we have misunderstandings, you must reject, as a judge, my heart and my conscience. You have seduced them and they are ever yours.

“ But you, *mio dolce amor*, did you rest well? Did you think of me at least twice? I give you three kisses: one on your heart, one on your mouth, one on your eyes.”

A quarrel? When the story of these two during the next month is known and all the slander about them remembered, it is not easy to allay the thought that Josephine deliberately expressed the suspicion (which she never could have had at all) in order to give herself an appearance of power and to flatter her young lover in his ambition — namely, the suspicion that Bonaparte had approached her to secure for himself her intercession with Barras, who now paraded in the Directory, and with his adherents. But however much they both were children of an age when everyone was accustomed to ask himself, even in the midst of enjoyment, what he could attain thereby, Josephine in reality, for all her incomprehension of this young man, was as far from suspicion as he himself, in this, his first love, was from calculation. That he had chosen (a fact for which he was soon reproached) a woman of rank and position belongs among the secrets of love, in which things other than a languishing look, a beautiful bosom, or an “ undulating gait ” are the fatal requisites. Thus it is not to be assumed that the hope (indirectly instilled in the lover) of finding a social prop in Josephine led to his desire to take possession of her with all his might. Rather this desire which so quickly arose came from his entire nature, which was inherently, passionately possessive, as nature embodied in its simplest form, the *amœba*, feels the urge to assimilate everything that comes within range. This desire received its social

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formation at the point from which the young man emerged as a social being — that is, from the clan, in which love connotes assimilation into the family community. Napoleon Bonaparte now not only could help his family, but could also support a wife: he loved a woman, slept with her; thus he had found the one whom he could marry. That she returned his love was beyond all doubt — otherwise how could it have gone so far with both of them? “*Je vous aime*” has become in French a phrase which expresses everything from passion to erotic politeness; Bonaparte heard it and said it as if no one had ever said it before: loyal to nature, which, through mating, forms the pair — the young patriarch, who by the wife wishes to become a man. He wanted to give completely, to take completely; finally he offered the great partnership for which he so greatly longed, as do all proud, ambitious, lonely people. He wanted seriousness in the play whose sweetness he had now learned; he wanted duty in the word which bewitched him — and unlimited mastery as the right of unconditional love.

Josephine had meanwhile become tolerably well accustomed to the passionate young lover. He worked as if possessed, and this left her time for her friends, the house, the creditors, with whom she now fared rather better, for recently she had received a substantial sum from Martinique; this, in consequence, made life immediately more amusing, but created demands correspondingly greater. To all this the young lover adapted himself quite well. He was neither splendid nor glittering, but he had scored more than a shortlived renown of a day with all the Directors; in fact, even the hard, just, uncongenial Carnot spoke of him — at that time — in terms of the highest praise. This was recompense for the peculiarities, large and small, which the young man possessed. She could show herself with him — indeed, get on quite well with him. And when he became altogether too boastful or assuming, she played either the persecuted, defenceless woman, which quieted him, or the great

lady, which intimidated him. In short, it could have gone on quite pleasantly this way for some time. But here he came, out of a clear sky, talking about marriage. At first Josephine was anything but enthusiastic. Why marry? He did not give up. Then she began to make inquiries. Her friends — above all, Barras, who would have liked to see her well provided for — mentioned her insecure situation in life, her debts, her fatherless children, and even hinted, more or less delicately, that, in view of her age, this would probably be her last chance. For a chance it was: although the young man had no fortune and had, moreover, great responsibilities to his numerous family, still he had, in a few years, got so far along, thanks to his certainly extraordinary gifts, that there could be no doubt about his future, particularly now that the Republic, after the short, patched-up peace, was more in need of capable generals than ever before. Bonaparte was candidate for chief command of the Italian army — and, for Josephine's sake, surely someone would take the trouble to see that this candidacy became a reality.

Everyone seems to have agreed in advising in favour of this marriage, even the old people at Fontainebleau. She had expected much dissuasion, remarks about a *mésalliance*, or at least some confirmation of her own doubts. So she was very much surprised. Did everybody, then, already see what she had thought was a secret between herself and her mirror? She became uncertain. On the other hand, her doubts increased. Had not Beauharnais also been a general, and a rather important-looking one, too? Were there not many youngsters such as Napoleon to be encountered on the streets of Paris with generals' insignia pinned to their shabby coats? Of course just now Bonaparte had a position. . . . But why, in God's name, marry? "Thirty-three years old," she told herself again, and thought of her mirror. But her other doubts could not be silenced. The young man was a braggart. In one letter (more of which will later be quoted) she wrote: "Barras assures me that he will, if I

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marry the General, obtain for him the chief command of the Italian army. Yesterday Bonaparte spoke to me of this appointment, which has not yet been granted, but about which his fellow soldiers are already whispering, and he said to me: 'Do you think *I* need patronage to rise? Some day all of them will be happy to take shelter under my protection. My sword is at my side, and with its help I shall go far.' " She did not see the eyes of him who spoke, nor comprehend the enormous will from which such confidence broke through — she merely became nervous at words which were too big. And although she herself was an immoderate creature, she became impatient at the apparent immoderation of her lover. Certainly all too often he made her nervous; that was the word. He was positive now, and if once he obtained a real claim, his demands would become intolerable. He liked to mix into everything, he would threaten her state of single blessedness, which she could no longer do without, and there was something else which she could not make quite clear to herself, for rational thinking was one of her weak points: this was something connected with gaiety and laughter, with the life she knew so well and needed so much. When this Bonaparte, drawn from his gloom, began to laugh, it made her feel uncomfortable; there was no relaxation in it, no cheerfulness. Often he missed her best sallies, and that annoyed him, or he laughed uproariously when there was no cause for it. When, years later, she was told that Talleyrand had called him "*l'inamusable*," she took up the word as something she had long sought in vain.

But her thirty-three years, the debts, the future. . . . She wanted to keep her house, her carriage; she wanted clothes, always beautiful new clothes, wanted people around her; she wanted at least to remain where she was — and common sense, that strange common sense, whispered: "If it cannot be done otherwise, well, then I shall do it with this General."

Josephine, now practically decided, nevertheless kept up her in-

quiries and in talk and letters sought further advice. Thus she wrote to a friend the following letter (part of which has already been quoted):

“Everyone wants me to remarry, my dear. All my friends advise me to do so, my aunt almost commands me, and my children implore. . . . You have seen General Bonaparte at my house. Well, it is he who wants to be father to the children of Alexandre Beauharnais, and husband to his widow. You will ask me if I love him. — Well . . . no. — If I have any aversion to him? No; but I am in a state of indifference which the faithful (that is, in regard to religion) think is worse than anything else. And as love is a kind of cult, one should not feel toward it as I do now. That is why I should like to have any advice of yours which would overcome the indecision of my weak character. Decisions have always been tiresome to my Creole nonchalance, which finds it easier to follow the will of others.

“I admire the courage of the General, his wide knowledge of affairs, and his ability to talk of them; also the brilliance of his mind, which makes it possible for him to divine the thoughts of others almost before they are spoken. But I must admit I fear the domination which apparently it is necessary for him to exert over everyone around him. There is something singular in his searching look which cannot be explained and which inspires even the members of the Directory with respect; judge for yourself just how he can frighten a woman with all this. In the end, this very thing which I should prize, this force of passion which betrays an energy that shuts out all doubt, is what stops the consent which I have often been ready to give.

“Since my first youth is behind me, can I hope to hold for very long this violent affection which in the General amounts almost to an attack of madness? If, after our union, he stops loving me, will he not reproach me for what he has done for me? Will he not think

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with regret of the many more brilliant marriages he might have made? What then shall I reply to him, what shall I do? I shall cry. — A fine way out, you will say. — Of course I know that it will be of little use, but it is always the only relief for me when someone has wounded my poor and easily offended heart. . . .”

This letter, so typical of Josephine, ends even more characteristically with these words: “ Without the worry of this marriage, I should be, in spite of everything, quite happy; but as long as the problem is hanging over me, I shall be tormented. . . .”

But the reason of her years was stronger than her love of freedom or her instinctive uneasiness about Napoleon. She would in truth have preferred Barras, Ouvrard, or any of the other important men of money. But these did not offer themselves. So the General, with his much vaunted prospects, was the best match she could make. And if it was a mistake, after all not much was lost. Anyway, she could now play the good republican and, in contrast to her social equals, be satisfied with a civil marriage which could be as easily dissolved as contracted. So she said yes.



## CHAPTER NINE



# CHANGE OF NAME

On the 24th of February 1796 Napoleon Bonaparte announced his betrothal to the Widow Detascher-[*sic*] Beauharnais. On March 7 he was named Commander-in-Chief of the Italian army.<sup>1</sup> Two days later, at ten o'clock at night, Josephine and Napoleon were married by the mayor (who had been routed out of his bed) of the 2nd Arrondissement, in a poorly furnished office lighted only by two tallow candles. The entire ceremony consisted in drawing up a protocol, reading and signing it. The witnesses for the bride were Barras and Tallien, for Napoleon Bonaparte his aide-de-camp and a man named Calmelet, who was entrusted by him and the busy Josephine with the execution of all sorts of duties. The notable thing about the marriage contract is the record of the ages of the parties to it: Josephine appears almost five years younger than she

<sup>1</sup> That Josephine brought Napoleon the chief command of the Italian army as dowry has become a historical commonplace. This statement, although often advanced and repeated, has never been proved. Josephine herself doubtless contributed to this legend, for she tried to make Napoleon believe (although without success) that she had assisted his rise in rank; later on she never contradicted the assertion that she had prepared for him the way to his ascendancy. In reality Barras could vote only as one of the five members of the Directory on an appointment proposed by Carnot, and that he would have given his ballot to the saviour of the Vendémiaire days without any intercession on Josephine's part is hardly to be doubted. The proposal to invest Napoleon with this important command resulted, in fact, from a plan of expedition prepared by him, the famous plan of the campaign in Italy.



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actually was, and Napoleon almost one year older, making them both twenty-eight. Indeed, as a boy Bonaparte had got into France by falsifying his age (this was necessary for his admission into the military academy); and ever since, the family of the Bonapartes had been not at all particular about dates. For instance, the three brothers, Joseph, Napoleon, and Lucien, all gave the same year, 1768, as the year of their births, on the occasions of their marriage ceremonies.

While Napoleon tried to have his marriage become as widely known as possible, even officially informing the government of it, the haste with which it was performed, its absence of pomp, apparently suited Josephine very well, for she now looked upon her bridegroom as once, long before, the Beauharnais family had looked upon her. That no member of the Bonaparte family, whose existence had so far not caused her any anxiety, had put in an appearance or even written to her (although she had met Lucien) was exactly according to her plan, which was to make very little of her change from the former Vicomtesse de Beauharnais to a Madame Bonaparte. To be sure, the General, who was now her husband, had often zealously assured her of the aristocratic origin of his family, supporting his claims with a great many dates and locations — but she had always had more feeling for the sound of names than for genealogy. And the name Bonaparte had never been heard by anybody in the world (that is, *her* world) before the event of Vendémiaire. And then *Napoleon!* It took years for her to become accustomed to that monstrous name.

Of course she would now have to share with him the house in the rue Chantereine, but he would not be much in Paris: in two days he was to leave for his post. In the evening of their marriage there was a simple little supper, with only the witnesses. Barras was one of these and, of course, had to be present — but Josephine's easily offended heart did not allow the thought to arise that, only

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a short time before, she had presided for the last time over one of the intimate feasts of Barras.

Two days and two nights Bonaparte spent with Josephine. Nothing is recorded of those forty-eight hours. In the vestibule of the bedroom in the house in the rue Chantereine in which Bonaparte embraced Josephine for the last time on the 11th of March was a *panneau* which depicted an eagle holding a bolt of lightning in his talons.

*BOOK THREE*

THE GREAT CHANCE







## CHAPTER ONE



# MANY LETTERS AND A REPLY

*Dans les plus grands amours il y a  
toujours un de trop.*

So slightly did the woman who had now become Josephine Bonaparte, and whose course of life thus far has here been described, look upon her marriage with the little Corsican as an incisive event, that the author as well as the greater number of his readers is far more aware of this fact than was the Josephine of that time. And although the author may not share the opinion of some of the readers that not until now does her real life-story begin (as, for instance, the actual biography of Immanuel Kant has its beginning only after he had lived half a century), yet the recorder of these historical events is highly sensitive to the feeling of expectancy (having perceived it himself the first time he ever occupied himself with this investigation): that now, after all the rhythmic crescendos and decrescendos, the *maestoso* movement appears with the entrance of the great figure, the great phrase, which is to develop into the theme Napoleon. But just at this point the author was obliged to realize (continuing the musical comparison) that his small orchestra must keep on playing his music of Josephine's life, all the more so because a tremendously powerful orchestra was roaring about it; for the part which Josephine played could easily become merely an accompany-

ing voice in all the real *maestoso*, the *rubato* of the great discoverer and conductor, and amid the world effect of such music. But the author who is considering the score of life in its complete polyphony may not care to compromise. Therefore he quickly permits the minor Josephine theme to be played as it now is being done — even though it may sound thin and shrill — before the great Napoleon theme begins, with its long, fateful *Allegro con brio*.

One of the poets of our day says that he is not anxious about lovers, for they are safe. But woe to those who are beloved!

We are aware that young Bonaparte, completely absorbed in a great love, had started upon the fearfully grandiose road which history calls the first Italian campaign, and that he drew into the legend his entire life, suddenly visible to all the world, together with everything ridiculous and with all the shortcomings that were connected with it. This young man, from being placed in command of an army of thirty thousand shabby, half-starved, and barefoot soldiers, had within one month become a figure illumined by such tremendous fame that the name Bonaparte was reflected to the farthest corners of Europe. From the very first day of their parting, he wrote letter after letter to the woman who had so reluctantly agreed to take his name for her own. But before these letters (to which the following chapters are devoted above all else) are heard in evidence, the recipient, sheltered neither by love nor by the events which were occurring, must here be graphically described with a few words.

The virgin forests of her native island, the exciting dreams of her girlhood, the profusion of her ardent desires — all these had been exhausted in Josephine. The touch of loneliness and melancholy, which time and again is able to carry playful joy into the very depths of life encircled by death, had been completely spent in many impersonal happenings. She had had absolutely enough of everything that savoured of the tragic or of tremendous shock. This

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satiety held captive in the deepest dungeons of her life whatever survived of old desires or anxious presentiments of her soul. Josephine, who once had sought to replace actual feeling with tears, sentimentality, or outbreaks quickly forgotten — even with emotional display over sentimental music — had reached the time when she undertook to play “life as it really is,” being eternally distant, and enjoying society to the very fullest extent. From that sphere Bonaparte had almost imperceptibly removed her a little and had drawn her into his own; her quickly enkindled senses had made her indulgent, his many ardent embraces had put her little bit of will-power to sleep. But now Bonaparte was once more out of the house which he had so quickly and so completely filled. And many guests came, bringing along with them the spirit of the time in their conversation and their desires — even in their dress. They influenced Josephine until she again was going from receptions to balls, from banquets to theatres, following the many and varied paths by which she sought to avoid being alone.

But the young man whom she had married because he perhaps would make a career for himself and would be able to provide for her comfortably had gone from the house and out of her thoughts. Yet more impetuously than ever his words reached her; he now began to demand through letters his place in her life, to ask for her feelings and thoughts — for everything that a man in love for the first time, who believes himself loved and desired, alone can think of.

On the very day of his departure Bonaparte wrote the first of his many letters to Josephine, the most vehement and sincere love-letters which have come down to us in a generation. They are especially unique from the fact that in all their wooing and tender caressing, in their longing cries and their loving anger, there is mixed — as if only incidentally — the very scantiest report of a campaign that is without an equal. It may also be mentioned in

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passing that the first letter of this adoring husband to his wife is addressed to Citizeness Beauharnais, later ones to Citizeness Bonaparte, in care of Citizeness Beauharnais, as well as the fact that the opening sentences speak of money. The first preserved letter (the previous one, written on the first day of his journey, has been lost) says:

“ 24th Ventôse, Year V [March 14, 1796]. I have written to you from Chatillon and have sent you *carte blanche* authorizing you to draw various sums of money which are due me. There must be seventy louis d’or in old money, and fifteen thousand livres in assignats.

“ Every moment takes me farther away from you, adorable one, and with each moment I find less strength to be absent from you. You are the ever present object of my thoughts; my imagination wears itself out in trying to picture what you are doing. When I see you sad, my heart is torn and my pain increases. When you are merry and in high spirits among your friends, I reproach you for having so soon forgotten our sorrowful parting of three days ago; for then you must be fickle and untouched by any deep feeling. As you see, I am not easy to satisfy; but, my dear friend, everything is changed when I fear that your health may be affected or that you have any reason to worry which I may not be aware of. Then I deplore the speed with which I have been torn out of your heart. I feel truly that your innate goodness no longer exists for me, and then I can only be satisfied when I am absolutely certain that nothing adverse is happening to you. When anyone asks me if I have slept well, I feel, before I answer, that I must receive a letter assuring me that you too have rested. Illnesses and the frenzy of men concern me only when I think they may strike you, my good friend. If my genius, which has for ever protected me in the midst of the greatest dangers, may be with you and guard you, then I offer myself defenceless. Oh, be not merry, but rather a little sad,



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and, above all, may your soul be as free from trouble as your beautiful body from illness. You know what our good Ossian says about it. Write me, my tender friend, of everything in detail and accept a thousand and one kisses from a love most devoted and true.”

Then on to Marseilles, where he again meets his mother and his sisters; past Toulon, the first stop in the ascendancy; to Nizza, where with the famous proclamation he takes over the command of the Italian army. In the letter written from this place another tune begins to be heard:

“I have not spent one day without loving you; I have not passed one night without holding you in my arms; I have not taken even a cup of tea without cursing the fame and the ambition which have carried me far away from the soul of my life. In the midst of business affairs, at the head of the troops, while I hurry through the country, I have only my adorable Josephine in my heart; she fills my mind and my thoughts. That I travel farther away from you with the speed of the current in the Rhone is only in order that I may see you again the sooner. When I rise to work in the middle of the night, it is in order to hasten by a few days the arrival of my sweet friend. — And with all this, in your letters of the 23rd and 26th Ventôse, you address me formally. How could you! Oh, you naughty one, how could you write such a letter? How cold it is! And then from the 23rd to the 26th four days have passed. What were you doing in the mean time that you did not write to your husband? . . . O my friend, this formality and these four days of silence make me long for the return of my former indifference. Woe to the one who is to blame! May he feel in punishment and agony [obscure in the original] what my own convictions and plain evidence have caused me to suffer! What are the tortures of hell, what the snake of the Furies? Your coldness! What will happen in two weeks?!!! My soul is sorrowful, my heart is a slave, and my imagination fills me with terror. . . . You do not love me so

much, you perhaps have already consoled yourself. Some day you will no longer love me at all: admit it to me; I will at least know how to accept this bad fortune. . . . Farewell, my wife, the torture, the happiness, the hope and soul of my life, whom I love and whom I fear, who inspires me with tenderest feelings, and calls me back to nature and stormy emotions like thunder and volcano. I beg of you neither eternal love nor faith, only truth and unmeasured frankness. The day on which you say to me: ' I love you less ' will be the last of my love or the last of my life. If my heart were base enough to love without receiving love in return, I would crush it with my teeth. Josephine! Josephine! Remember what I have often said to you: nature created me with a strong and determined spirit. You she formed of lace and gauze. Have you ceased loving me? Forgive me, soul of my life, my brain is warped with too much planning. My heart, so completely filled by you, is tortured by fears which make me unhappy. I am annoyed that I cannot call you by your name, Bonaparte. I am waiting for you to write it to me. Farewell. Oh, if you love me less, you never loved me at all. Then am I indeed greatly to be pitied.

BONAPARTE

" PS. The war this year is unrecognizable.

" I have had meat, bread, and fodder distributed; my cavalry will soon decamp; my soldiers display a confidence in me which cannot be expressed in words. It is only you that causes me anxiety; only you — joy and torture of my life. A kiss for your children, whom you do not mention. God, that would at least make your letter half again as long. And your visitors would be deprived of the pleasure of seeing you so early as ten o'clock in the morning. . . ."

It is quite unnecessary to have the lost letters of Josephine in order to picture what they must have contained: how she tried to tame this wildness, which was rather incomprehensible to her; how

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she sought to calm this fervour, which was unsuited to her; how she attempted to contrast the phraseology of average married people of the world with this unconsciously sinister frenzy. Suddenly to address him formally and at the very first not to write him for four days, while he found time to write her even at the cost of sleep and while he was changing a miserable human mass into an army! It would not be long until he would have thought it a favour if Josephine had allowed four days to pass without writing. While he, in fantastic haste, striking in unexpected places, broke through the Austrian and Piedmontese armies, cutting them off from each other, making of starved masses splendid instruments of his will, he had always sent Josephine again and again his love-calls, his adjurations, his threatening tenderness, and the vehement anguished love of his youth.

One would be inclined from now on to relate the story of this love of Bonaparte for Josephine through his letters — but there are too many such letters and they would take up much more space in this biography than they should, from the view-point of the recipient. They would, to return to the initial comparison of this chapter, drown out the small orchestra and would make of the canon within which we have to keep our theme the great monologue of a lover with his love. Thus in front of the other letters and excerpts we must definitely place Josephine, in the way in which she received the messages which broke so disturbingly into her comfort, those burning meteors which struck so hastily into her lazy amusements. We do not know how concerned she was with the first letters, although this can be imagined from her utterances which are mirrored in Bonaparte's answers. It is certain that she soon began to show the letters as a sort of curious adornment and a confirmation of the worth of her love; that she fumbled the leaves, on which there stood out names of places like Montenotte, Novi, Arcole, or Rivoli, before the asthmatic nose of her anti-Bonapartist

dog, Fortuné; and that, too busy with dress, rouge, and coiffures, she had given the letters as they arrived to her lady's-maid to open and to be the first to read. If many trustworthy utterances did not bear witness to such behaviour, the disappearance of all too many of the letters, and the curious emergence of some of them (such as those published many years later by Tennant), would lead one to see the careless indifference with which these messages were received by Josephine — coming, as they did, from a fervent heart and soon becoming an inevitable accompaniment of life.

On the eve of the first remarkable accomplishments<sup>1</sup> of this Italian campaign (resembling one of Alexander the Great's) Bonaparte wrote to his wife: "I have received the letter which, as you say, you were obliged to send unfinished because you were going to the country. And afterwards you assume an attitude of jealousy toward me, who am here overwhelmed by work and great hardships. Oh, it is true, my good friend, I am wrong. In the spring it is much more pleasant in the country, and doubtless there was also a nineteen-year-old lover with you. There is one other reason for not losing a moment in writing to the one who three hundred miles distant from you lives only and feels joy only in the recollection of your presence, and who reads your letters like a man who after a six-hour hunt devours his favourite dish. I am not satisfied; your

<sup>1</sup> Following the example of Iung (Jung) in *Bonaparte et son temps*, the all too many historical events which can scarcely find room indirectly in this presentation itself may be noted down here simply as follows: March 27, 1796, Proclamation of Bonaparte (who now for the first time in a message to the Directory omitted the *u*); April 10, beginning of hostilities; April 12, battle at Montenotte; April 13, battle at Millesimo; April 22, battle at Mondovi; April 25, capture of Cherasco; following this the armistice which excluded Piedmont from the enemy lines; May 7, crossing of the Po at Piacenza; May 10, battle at Lodi and crossing of the Adda; May 15, entry into Milan, victory jubilee in Paris, and Paris treaty with Sardinia; May 30, crossing of the Mincio, capture of Peschiera; June 3, taking of Verona; June 19, taking of Bologna, Ferrara, and Reggio; June 24, armistice of Foligno with the Papal States; June 28, occupation of Livorno; July 29, battle at Salo; July 30 and August 1, battle at Lonato; August 3, battle at Castiglione. It need only be added that all the battles were victories.

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last letter is as cool as friendship. I have found none of the fire in it which inflames your looks and which I sometimes thought I had enkindled. But how strange I am! I have realized that your previous letters weigh all too heavily on my soul; the emotion which they caused disturbed my peace and excited my senses. I longed for cooler letters, and now these bring the icy coldness of death. The fear of not being loved by Josephine, the idea that she may be fickle . . . but I create these tortures for myself. You cannot have instilled within me such immeasurable love without having shared it yourself; and with your soul, your mind, and your judgment no one could, in response to absolute devotion and sacrifice, deal such a death-blow. . . . You write me of your weak stomach: I hate it. Farewell until tomorrow, *mio dolce amor*. A thought of my own wife and of victory over fate — these are my desires. A singular thought and complete, worthy of the one who thinks of you every moment. . . . You will receive oranges, perfume, and orange-blossom water from me. . . . A kiss, deeper, deeper than your bosom.”

The letter which now follows — the last of the first phase of this campaign, in which six victories were won in two weeks, several fortresses taken, and the richest section of Piedmont conquered — adds to the words of love, to the display of self-torturing jealousy, and to the presentiment, appearing like lightning, that the jealousy may have been well founded, the ringing of the new theme: Josephine’s journey to the Italian theatre of war. It is this theme which definitely fills all the following chapters of the love-romance, a wretchedly sad theme, made up of a fragment of the melody of fate and something else added reminding one of a street-ballad. But this theme will be heard quite often enough for some time to come. Here is the way it sounds:

“ My sweet friend . . .

“ I have received your letters of the 16th and the 20th. You have

not written me for a great number of days. What are you doing? My dear, good friend, I am not at all jealous, only sometimes very troubled. *Come quickly*. I warn you; if you delay, you will find me ill. The hardships and your being absent from me — these are too much all at once.

“Your letters are the joy of my life, and happy days are for me not frequent. Junot [Bonaparte’s aide-de-camp] is bringing twenty-two banners to Paris. You are to return here with him, do you hear? If this by any possible chance does not happen [omission in the text] if he should not come, a misfortune for ever irreparable, despairing sorrow, endless torture, if I were to have the great unhappiness of seeing him return alone. My adorable friend, he will see you, he will draw breath in your temple. Perhaps you will even grant him the unique and priceless favour of a kiss on your cheek. And I shall be here all alone, far, far away. But surely you will come? You will be here, at my side, at my heart, in my arms, at my lips. Take wings, come, come! But come slowly, for the road is long, hard, and wearisome. If your carriage upset, or if any misfortune befell you, if the fatigue . . . come carefully, my adorable friend, but be often with me in thought. . . .<sup>1</sup>

“I do not know if you need money, because you have never spoken to me of your financial affairs. If you do need any, go to my brother for it; he has two hundred louis which belong to me. If you wish to obtain a position for someone, send him to me, I shall take care of him. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> After the first letters given *in extenso*, the delineation from now on must content itself with the insertion of characteristic excerpts. The letters thus far reproduced, as well as all others before the 6th of July, are cited after Masson; later ones are taken from the two-volume collection of letters published by Hortense (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères; 1833), the first one of which is dated July 6. This collection, from which everything is excluded that might cast any reflection on Josephine, has become the gospel of all the biographers who from a century ago until our present day (such as, for example, Edouard Driault) have taken pains to make Josephine an ideal figure without sex, and her marriage to Bonaparte a model one for young girls.

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In the next letter, written after the armistice with Piedmont, the call for Josephine to come to him grows more urgent and more determined: “ [April 26.] Murat, who will deliver this letter to you, is to give you the explanation, my adorable friend, of what I have done, what I am going to do, and what I am longing for. I have concluded an armistice with the King of Sardinia. Three days ago I sent Junot with my brother, but they will arrive after Murat, who is now travelling by way of Turin. In the letter I sent you with Junot I wrote you to leave with him and come to me; today I am asking you to travel with Murat and come via Turin. In this way you will save fourteen days. Therefore it may be possible that I shall see you here before the fourteen days are past! Come, I am quite beside myself with joy at the very thought; there are accommodations ready for you in Mondovi and in Tortona. . . . Never before has a woman been loved more devotedly, more passionately, more tenderly than you. And to no woman was it ever possible to become absolute mistress of a heart, to dictate to it its taste and affections, and to formulate all its desires. . . . No letter from you. I receive only one in every four days; if you loved me, you would write me twice daily. But of course you must chatter with those unimportant men visitors from ten o’clock in the morning, and then listen to the gossip and the nonsense of hundreds of little fashionable gentlemen putting on airs, until one o’clock at night. In the countries where there are still good manners, everybody is at home by ten o’clock in the evening, but in those countries a wife also writes to her husband, thinks of him, and lives for him. Farewell. Josephine, you are for me an inexplicable monster . . . I love you more and more every day. . . . A kiss on your mouth, one on your heart. There is surely no one else in it but me, is there? And also one on your breast. . . .” Then follow instructions concerning the servants and luggage which Josephine was to take along with her, for at that time it was evident that Bonaparte safely

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counted on her coming. In his impatience he turned to Barras and finally to Carnot; and it appears as if he hoped that help offered officially in the preparations for her journey would urge Josephine on to a speedier departure.

For it was already plain that Josephine was delaying. At the outset the Directory spared her any personal excuses. One cannot escape the suspicion that she had induced Barras to prohibit the journey, even to postpone it *ad kalendas græcas* until after the taking of Milan; this would assure the Directory that the victorious commander (in order to vary the wording of the annulment of this refusal) would finally, in Josephine's arms, not disdain the laurels because of the pure myrtle. Josephine delayed — or, rather, she was determined to postpone her departure as long as she possibly could do so. Bonaparte had grown increasingly for her from a lover into a duty, which she recognized only because it was made more appetizing to her day by day. For as, in his time, she had sunned herself in the short rays of Alexandre Beauharnais's fleeting glory, she now took — not as the woman she formerly had been, pushed aside and separated from her husband, but as the young wife of the young victor — her greatest possible share of the amazing admiration (which grew with each message of victory that arrived) for this name Bonaparte, which she no longer sought to keep secret. The Revolution had rapidly rewarded a great number of its defenders with fame. But no leader had ever swung himself upwards with such force and speed. All at once, in a new and most unexpected manner, Josephine had attained her "position." She was the wife of this youth rushing from victory to victory, whom his soldiers already deified, whom they had named their "*petit caporal*," and who spoke of each of his great achievements as if it were only a beginning. And that she was the beloved, the adored wife of this Bonaparte Josephine wore as an appropriate finery to all the receptions of honour and the celebrations of victory; during these



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occasions, she would, quite by accident, together with her powder-puff and handkerchief, pull out the last letter which had arrived from Bonaparte; she would show it to the nearest friends, who were often scarcely even acquaintances. She amused herself in "heavenly" fashion. Never had Paris been so bewitching, never had people been so charming to her. The ozone of great success made the air she breathed light and prickling; it really seemed as if the successes were her own. It was certainly astonishing enough that all this had happened through the ridiculous little Bonaparte; she took it all, enjoyed it, thought no more about it, and really did not place even the smallest aureole around the victor, whose name was greeted everywhere with shouts of triumph, though he now of course appeared to be a very good match indeed. He sent money to her, twice without even having been asked. Her creditors left her in peace, the nicest-looking *muscadins*, the young men of fashion, whom she did not even know, greeted her on the promenades and in the theatres, with bows that were still lower than the blasé affectation of that day prescribed. She heard the name which she herself at first had kept so secret whispered softly everywhere. Heavens, such nonsense was not to be thought of as her being forced to leave Paris then — just then! Fortunately there was the fact that this journey had been prohibited, which she hoped might continue for a much longer time. But this did not last. Sooner even than those of the new conqueror's admirers who believed most in miracles had hoped, Bonaparte celebrated his entry into the capital of Lombardy. And now that he held Milan as a pledge, no rather remote influence of the Directory was of any further use; Carnot kept his promise given to Bonaparte, which for Josephine meant not only permission to make the journey, but the command to hasten it.

From several of Bonaparte's letters it is quite evident that, in Josephine's lost writings, she had frequently complained, either veiledly or openly, of an uncertain state of her health. This now

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appears as a preliminary to the excuse by means of which she succeeded in abandoning the journey — imperative as it had become — which would have led her into the arms of her all too loving husband and to the scene of his achievements; the echo in Paris was more enjoyable and far more to her liking. When, in her later years, there developed within her ever more strongly that extraordinary dowry from her youth on the far-distant island — the superstitions with which the children and the frightened Negro women fortified themselves — Josephine must have been terribly afraid of the excuse with which she lied her way out of this journey. She invented an occurrence which at that time would have been just as unwished for as later she imploringly longed for it; she wrote to Bonaparte that she was pregnant — and she remained in Paris.



## CHAPTER TWO



# AMUSEMENT AND PATHOS

Shortly after the battle at Lodi, Bonaparte received the news of Josephine's alleged pregnancy. He thereupon replied: "Then it is true that you are pregnant! Murat wrote me of it, but he has also told me that this has made you ill and that he did not deem it advisable for you to undertake such a long journey. I shall thus be robbed still longer of the happiness of holding you in my arms. For several months more, then, I must be far away from all that I love. Can it be that I am not to know the joy of seeing you with your little belly? This must surely make you very interesting. You write me that you have changed a great deal. Your letter is short and sad, and the writing is trembling. What is the matter with you, my adorable friend? What is worrying you? Oh, do not stay in the country; remain in the city, try to amuse yourself, and believe me when I tell you that there is no more real torture to my soul than the thought of your suffering or being troubled. I thought I was jealous, but I swear that this is not the case. I believe that I myself would rather give you a lover than to know that you are sad. . . . Matters here are going well; but my heart is filled with an anxiety which cannot be described. You are far away from me and ill! Be merry and take good care of yourself — of the one whom my heart treasures more highly than the whole universe. . . ."

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Then, after the triumphant entry into Milan, such a triumph as no man since the days of Alexander had experienced, Bonaparte wrote: "Milan, 29th Floréal [April 18]. I do not know why it is that since this morning I am more content. I have a presentiment that you are on the way here, and this thought fills me with joy. Of course, you must travel by way of Piedmont, the road is much better and shorter. You will come to Milan and you will be very satisfied, for it is indeed very beautiful. . . . I burn with the desire to see how you carry children. This doubtless gives you a majestic bearing, commanding respect, which, in my opinion, must make you look rather droll. Above all, don't be ill; no, my good friend, you will come here and everything will fare well with you; you will have a little child, as pretty as its mother; it will love you as its father does, and when you have grown very old — a hundred years — it will be your comfort and your joy. . . ."

At that time Bonaparte received the letter from Carnot stating that nothing more stood in the way of Josephine's journey. As Josephine received this information correspondingly earlier, she might have been in Milan almost at the same time as Carnot's message. But just then, after the conquest of Milan, it seemed to Josephine utterly impossible for her to leave Paris — Paris that was ringing with victory jubilees, the great joyful city, which now was so filled with the name Bonaparte — her name — and which had bestowed upon her an epithet that totally eclipsed the fading one of Madame Tallien: Notre-Dame-de-la-Victoire, Our dear Lady of Victory. And there also were plans for changing the rue Chantierine into the rue de la Victoire. In this festive confusion her slight illness improved — it had been the small nucleus of truth in her fairy-tale of pregnancy — and Josephine went about, rode through Paris, showed herself wherever it was possible, had clothes which were triumphantly beautiful and costly as great victories,

and could not drink enough of all the homage. Meanwhile her pregnancy had to be insisted upon for some time as an excuse — if she could not find anything else, she would of course be obliged to go. She did not bother herself much more about thinking and stayed in Paris.

And Bonaparte wrote letter after letter: “ Again so many days have passed without a word from Josephine! ” In his outbursts of anger and complaint can be heard a bitter sadness. But still his great affection sought a straw of explanation for everything perplexing; love again stammered out its yearning, its anxiety over the beloved one. Bonaparte was tendered a great banquet in Milan, at which five or six hundred pretty and very fashionable women tried to please him. But no one had compared with Josephine, and within half an hour he had left the feast, sad and troubled. He rushed along from battle to battle, was hardly ever a day in the same place, conquered, negotiated entirely on his own responsibility with the representatives of defeated or threatened powers — he, a young man only twenty-six years old, concluding treaties with the Pope, with the Kingdom of Naples. And the messenger by whom he sent the next letter to Josephine was the greatest of the Milanese grandees, the Duke of Serbelloni. In this letter he said: “ Josephine, where will this letter reach you? If it is in Paris, then my unhappiness has become a certainty. You no longer love me. And all that remains for me is death. . . . O my love, my tears are flowing. There is no more rest, no more hope. I bow before the will and the unswerving command of fate. I am overwhelmed with fame, and this makes me feel my grief with far greater bitterness. I shall become accustomed to everything in this condition of affairs except to this one thing: not to respect you any longer. . . . That is impossible! My Josephine is on the way, she loves me at least a little; so much avowed love cannot in two months have turned into nothing. I hate Paris, women, and love . . . this con-

dition is abominable . . . and your behaviour. . . . But shall I accuse you? No. *Your conduct is that of your fate.* . . .”

And then in the next letter: “ Josephine, you were supposed to have left Paris on the 5th [Prairial], you were supposed to have started on the 11th, on the 12th you had not yet gone. . . . My heart was open for joy; now it is filled with pain. Mail after mail arrives without bringing me any letters from you. And when you do write to me, the few words and the style never show any deep feeling . . . you have never loved. . . . I have hastened my operations because you, according to my calculations, should have been in Milan on the 13th, and yet you are still in Paris. . . . My misfortune lies in having known you too little, yours in having estimated me merely as one of the men that surround you. My heart never feels anything half-way. It had denied itself love; you instilled into it an immeasurable passion, an intoxication which is humiliating. . . . Why have you allowed me to hope for a feeling which you do not possess?!! But reproaches are not worthy of me. I have never believed in happiness. Each day death hovers around me . . . is life worth the trouble of making so much of it? Farewell, Josephine, stay on in Paris, write to me no more, but at least respect my place of refuge. A thousand daggers tear at my heart; do not strike into it yet deeper. Farewell, my happiness, my life, my all that there is for me on earth.”

And then three days later: “ Ever since the 18th, my dear Josephine, I have thought and hoped you were in Milan. Then I rushed from the field of battle at Borghetto to seek you, and I did not find you. A few days later I learned through the post that you had not left at all, but it brought me no letter from you. . . . The Tessin had overflowed its banks, so I went to Tortona in order to wait for you there; day after day have I waited for you in vain. . . .” Then upon sorrowful love-laments and desperate accusations follow the most anxious and sincere tenderness, the fear

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of having hurt Josephine, and the imploring command to nurse and take care of herself when she is ill.

The same tone can be heard in the long letter of the next day, with which one was at the same time sent to his brother, Joseph Bonaparte. The cry of a tortured heart full of unendurable forebodings, anxiety over Josephine's health, and a beseeching plea for some word of relief and comfort: "You know my heart, you know how it burns. You know that I have never been in love, that Josephine is the first woman whom I have ever adored. Her illness plunges me into despair. Everyone forsakes me. No one writes to me. I am left all alone with my fears and my sorrow. You, too, do not write to me. If she is quite well, if she can undertake the journey, then I long most fervently for her coming. I must see her and press her to my heart. I love her unto madness, and I can no more remain away from her. If she no longer loves me, I have nothing else left on earth to do. O my good friend, I commend myself into your keeping. See to it that my courier does not tarry in Paris even six hours, and that he returns giving me back my life."

However yearning, passionate, sad, or desperate the former letters may have been, none of them show in such a decisive manner the degree and kind of Bonaparte's love as the one which was sent on 8th Messidor [June 26] from the headquarters in Pistoia. Before this letter was written, Bonaparte had already received several detailed messages concerning Josephine, one of which told him that the Directory had now impressed upon Josephine that she should finally make use of the permission, given so long ago, to begin the journey. After this information Bonaparte could have no more doubts about the true reason for Josephine's delay and how matters actually stood concerning her illness and her pregnancy. And this youth of twenty-six years, who was as impetuous, as angry, and as uncontrollable as a young savage, this "Alexander and Achilles" who was flattered and cheered by everyone, certain

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now that the woman to whom his first love had been given had lied to him all the time and had preferred above him the pleasures of Paris, now wrote the following letter:

“ During the past month I have received from my good friend only two notes, each containing three lines. Has she so much to do? Does she, then, feel no need to write to her good friend or to think of him? To live without thinking of Josephine would mean death and oblivion. Your picture illumines my thoughts and cheers up the black and dismal image of sadness and pain. . . . Perhaps a day will come when I shall see you again, for I do not doubt that you are still in Paris. Well, on that day I shall show you my pockets full of the letters which I have not sent you because they were too stupid — yes, that is the word. Good God! Tell me, you who know so well how to instil love into others without yourself loving, do you not know how love can be cured? I would give much for this healing drug. You were supposed to leave on the 5th Prairial, and, fool that I am, I expected you on the 13th. As if a pretty woman could give up her habits, her friends, her Madame Tallien, a dinner at Barras’s house, the presentation of a new play, and Fortuné, yes, Fortuné! You love everything else more than you do your husband. For him you have only a little respect and a part of that kindness with which your heart overflows. Every day I repeat again and again your wrong deeds, your faults, and scourge myself with them in order to love you no longer — but oh, I love you only all the more. Finally, my matchless little mother, I will tell you my secret: make fun of me, stay on in Paris, have lovers of whom the whole world may know, never write to me, and — for all that, I will only love you ten times more. If this is not madness, fever, delirium! And I shall never recover from it (oh yes, Lord, I shall recover!). Only do not try to tell me you are ill, do not attempt to justify yourself. Good God! You are forgiven, I love you unto madness, and never will my poor heart cease to give you its love. If you had



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not loved me, my fate would be quite mad. You did not write to me, you were ill, you did not come. The Directory did not approve of it after your illness, and then the little child stirred so much within you that it caused you pain. . . . But you have now left Lyons, you will be in Turin on the 10th, on the 12th in Milan, where you will await me. You will be in Italy, and I shall still be absent from you. Farewell, my love, a kiss on your mouth, one on your heart. . . .

“ We have concluded peace with Rome, which gives us money. Tomorrow we shall be in Livorno, and as soon as I can, I shall be in your arms, at your feet, at your breast.”

But even then, after Bonaparte had asked the powers of Paris to send him the wife who did not wish to hear his love-calls, the husband who longed for her had to wait — and this became ever more and more difficult — far beyond the time he had finally believed would be his great festal day. Thirteen days again passed after this 12th Messidor, on which Josephine was supposed to have been in Milan, before the feverishly awaited courier at last appeared with the news of her arrival. Bonaparte immediately rushed from his headquarters to Milan and spent three days with Josephine. He had forgiven everything and forgotten nothing. Anger and worry were ever present in his love and bestowed upon it a new hunger for this woman who was as tender and as devoted as a lover and yet behind whose assumed charm there lay this inexplicable fact of the long months of waiting, this dangerously alluring thing which was always again present after the wildest embraces and which resisted all attempts at possession. It was an ever deeper, more seductive attraction for this young man, a kind of danger, one with purpose and action.

On the passport that the Directory had issued to Josephine for her Italian journey, which could now no longer be avoided, there appeared among the list of the people who accompanied her the

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name of Hippolyte Charles; he was more accurately designated as Adjutant-General of the Italian army. How this Charles, who was a good-looking officer of the hussars, but not distinguished for any special merits, came to be among the escorting party accompanying the wife of his Commander-in-Chief can only be presumed from conclusions which may be drawn from later facts. This young man, resplendent in his gold-embroidered uniform, is described as being of medium height and exceedingly graceful figure. One of his pre-eminent characteristics was his ability to please all kinds of women by his uncurbed inclination for stale jokes and clownish puns. That he was found in the travelling company which brought a newly wedded wife to her husband has already been explained at the beginning of this paragraph. For now the motifs in Josephine's life-story begin to resolve themselves ever more and more into a jumble of details. Her history from now on whirls ever faster on the outside and moves ever more slowly within; and the recorder will do well if he can clearly emphasize a few themes that are still plain and intelligible, so that subsequent facts may at times be fitted together in a somewhat vivid representation.

Hippolyte Charles, then, was a young officer who came with Josephine to Italy — with the wife of the young commander to this young army of the *Chartreuse de Parme*; in it the ages of the generals and lieutenants varied but little. Youth at once surrounded Josephine, truly fresh, heroically “savage and pious” youth who because of their victory forgot the ideas for which they fought; they still possessed all the pathos of the morning of life, including death in happiness, glorifying it with the vitality of one who on the morrow will begin the same game anew, even though it may send him back into the intoxication of existence or toss him, torn to pieces, into one vast grave. Adorned with all the shrewd arts and sorcery of late youth, lovely in the experienced allurements of her life's afternoon, Josephine came into this southern summer land

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full of young victory. In the Palazzo Serbelloni, with its large, shadowy rooms and its fine white furnishings, Bonaparte had prepared a welcome for her after his own heart: great and princely, but without the small adornments of domestic comfort. Ceremonious receptions, pompous homage, ancient solemnity soon surrounded her as did the Palazzo. Everything was a little too great. There was far too much of Corneille in behaviour and conversation, and too little of the Théâtre Feydeau, which had been her joy in Paris. And even leaving the Italians aside, all these young Frenchmen were not really "nice" young people. These officers from twenty to twenty-five years of age, who came to pay her homage, already had something of the excessiveness of Bonaparte, their laughter caused no joy, they were clumsy and then all of a sudden pompous. They talked to a pretty woman as if she were a goddess (probably they had known only the complete opposite).

Josephine really loved being honoured — the conviviality, the concerts, the fine banquets with hosts of people. But soon everything seemed to her like a note too loud, too excitable. It really resembled Bonaparte's letters, of which, now that he was again so busy with his war, she received almost daily one and sometimes two. She missed the thing which she herself valued so highly, the newly acquired "middle line," which meant taking nothing too seriously, delight in pleasure, a playful joy in conversation, a little humorous daring or self-indulgent sentimentality amid all this expenditure of emotion and effort. What was the matter with all these good-looking young men? They were Frenchmen, and not a few of them had, in spite of revolution and war, learned manners at home! Now they were all little Bonapartes; for him the excuse could always be made that, with all the military glory he had won for France, he was, after all, not a Frenchman. All desire for laughter was lost; puns turned to leather in the mouth when one was constantly surrounded by this admixture of ceremony and rudeness,

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this sightless frenzied staring, this burning of incense to a statue instead of to oneself, when at a dance one was forced to listen, instead of to a pretty little word, to a long harangue about Bonaparte at Lodi or whatever these places were called.

And then all these letters that one could not get away from here as in Paris. Josephine felt in the midst of all this unceasing adulation an ever increasing homesickness for Paris, for the society of her kind, the half-tones, the skeptical pleasures, for the unpedantic conversation concerning interests made savoury by self-irony, for men and the facetiously humorous play of women with love; she longed ardently for a consequential treatment of soap-bubbles and for the shift of any unavoidable significance into a subordinate phrase. With Bonaparte she let herself go, not completely, but quite comfortably, for he found everything delightful in her; she spoke in her own way, even though he understood neither humour nor nuance; he gazed at her eyes, her mouth, and accepted it as a gift. But for many of the other people she was obliged to act as her own interpreter; she had to use a filtered discourse, to say things like a teacher of languages — it drove her to desperation.

It was this trifling desperation which Josephine herself did not take really very tragically that gave to the elegant jester — the Lieutenant of Hussars whose role as a comedian was never disturbed by any familiarity with death experienced on the battle-field — the exceptional position among all his comrades who were distinguished for their heroism. Hippolyte Charles spoke the Parisian French of the *muscadins*, the young men of fashion; with the greatest perfection he lisped the sibilants as the style required; he could not pronounce one sentence without adding either exaggeration or curtailment as a spice. He made grimaces, walked on his hands, jumped over chairs, danced like no one else, had a feminine mouth, full of very white teeth, and was as witty as he was shrewd;

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he knew the foolish and the ridiculous side of every power and achievement, the carefully concealed crooked pathway to every success, the lack of consideration and all the tricks of the climbers in creating every new fortune. In short, Hippolyte Charles was a true child of the time, washed in all the bloody and dirty waters of the Revolution, purely of the unheroic type, despising ideas, making self-preservation a holy task; around this one sanctuary of the impenetrable ego the blooming garden of little plants — weeds suited to the time — was allowed to thrive. This fellow, who from an early age was quite intimate with everything feminine (and he himself possessed many of the traits), now spent more and more time with Josephine. Her mature charm, the acknowledged smartness of “the afternoon rose,” attracted him as much as her position — which meant power and the ability to bestow it. And Josephine was greatly amused with him, his fashionable buffoonery, his depraved wit. He was a specimen of the class which is called gigolo today; young enough still to be able to affect the senses through a little bit of sentimentality, and besides so cunning and so brimming with slight suggestions of danger that he became a highly agreeable companion for this woman of thirty-four years, disillusioned and pathetically tired. And at the time when Bonaparte was writing his wife the many affectionate, passionate, grateful, and humbly devoted letters from every camp, Josephine had this very unheroic hussar with her wherever it was possible — and the thought of this feasible arrangement sank ever more deeply into her heart. In addition she again had something of the old, trusted drug which lent new charm to the many festive gaieties; she had a bit of Paris with her and was almost satisfied, especially since Bonaparte came to see her but seldom. During this time she wrote to her aunt in Fontainebleau: “. . . I have the most amiable of husbands to be found anywhere. I have no time left to wish for anything. My will is

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his. All the day long he is absorbed in admiration of me, as if I were a goddess. It would really be impossible for him to be a better husband. . . .”

In the first weeks of her stay in Italy this war, to which she was indebted for all the new honours, came a little too close to her physically. Bonaparte had sent for her, and on the way back she was almost cut off by an enemy column; her carriage was fired upon from besieged Mantua, and one of the members of her escort was wounded. Since Josephine's terrible fright over the reality of war, never before thought of, and the sight of the wounded, Bonaparte had refused to expose her again to the risks of a journey within the actual war area. He was content to know that she was in range of his army, to think that he could see her perhaps very soon, and to feel that she would receive his letters more quickly — also that he might have occasional replies from her. However, these became ever scarcer and scarcer, especially since the autumn air was so balmy in Lombardy, and Josephine grew aware of how many lovely places, made festive in her honour, there were in that country. Again the laments and questionings began: “. . . You do not write me; you do not love your husband; you know what great pleasure your letters give him, yet you do not write him even a half-dozen random lines. What do you do all day long, madame? What important affair robs you of the time to write to your good lover? What other affection is there that smothers and sets aside your love, the tender and constant love which you have promised him? Who may this *merveilleux* be — this new lover who demands all your time, the tyrant of your days who hinders you from paying attention to your husband? Josephine, take care; on some beautiful night your doors will fly open, and I shall be there! ”

Over and over again Bonaparte was obliged to postpone the meeting he so longed for with Josephine; each day of this campaign might bring surprises, or sudden decisions which he alone would

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need to make. On the 24th of November he finally wrote: "I hope, my sweet friend, soon to hold you in my arms. I love you unto madness. . . . Everything is going well. Wurmser was defeated yesterday at Mantua. Nothing is lacking in your husband's happiness but Josephine's love." On the day following this note he could no longer stay with his army; he hurried to Milan, as fast as possible, entered the Palazzo Serbelloni with his young heart beating. Josephine was not in her rooms; he rushed through the house, roared, raved, and finally learned that she was in Genoa. Then he wrote to her:

"Milan, 7th Frimaire, Year V [November 27], three o'clock in the afternoon.

"I came to Milan; I rushed into your apartments. I left everything in order to see you, to fold you close in my arms . . . you are not here; you run from city to city following the festivities; you go away from me when I come; you do not care for your dear Napoleon. It was only a whim that made you love him, your fickleness makes you again indifferent to him.

"I am accustomed to dangers and I know the cure for the ills and vexations of life. This unhappiness which I feel, however, is incalculable. I had no right to count on it.

"I shall stay here until the 9th Frimaire. Do not disturb yourself, run after your pleasures; happiness is for you alone. The whole world is only too happy to be permitted to please you, and only your husband is so very unhappy."

After two days and two nights of waiting and raving, Bonaparte wrote what is perhaps the most affecting of all his letters:

"I have received the courier whom Berthier sent from Genoa. You did not have any time to write to me. I can easily understand that. You are encircled by play and pleasures and would be doing wrong if you made the very smallest sacrifice for me.

"Berthier was kind enough to show me the letter which you

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wrote him. It is not my intention to let you disturb yourself over the plans and pleasures arranged for you; I am not worthy of this trouble, and the happiness or sorrow of a man whom you do not love has no claim upon your interest.

“ So far as I am concerned, to love you alone, to make you happy, to do nothing which may annoy you — that is my fate and the aim of my life.

“ Be happy, do not reproach yourself, do not take any interest in the happiness of a man who lives solely in your life and who enjoys only your pleasures and your happiness. It would be wrong for me to demand of you a love equal to my own. Why ask lace to weigh as much as gold? . . . It is my misfortune if nature has not endowed me with the attractions that can hold you; but the things I do deserve of Josephine are consideration and respect, for I love her unto madness, and her alone. Farewell, my adorable wife, farewell, my Josephine. May fate crowd all anxiety and torture into my heart, but may it give my Josephine fair and happy days. . . .”

Something in these letters — which she should have read more carefully — together with the remonstrances of Berthier, who knew Bonaparte very well, began to cloud Josephine's gay assurance a little. She came back to Milan, but without hurrying. She was filled with a daring confidence in her power over Bonaparte, and she drove away the uncomfortable bit of conscience that strove to get a foothold within her by the conviction that her mere presence would be sufficient to make the enamoured husband forget this little incident. And it seemed as if she were right. A halt in the operations of the war allowed Bonaparte a longer stay in Milan; and these weeks of being together passed by so untroubled that Josephine herself soon let the trifling difficulty pass from her mind, especially as the General's presence in the city gave opportunity for a great number of festivities; hence she was kept busy enough.



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But Bonaparte forgot nothing, nothing. Whatever reason and feeling seemed to pass over, an undeceived — one might say a physical — memory retained. And this was, in act and behaviour, evidence of the recollection of all that had happened to his nature. Bonaparte kept on loving Josephine, his body yearned for her, and the singular tenderness which sought to thrive even in the midst of his frightful expenditure of vitality still drew him on to his wife. But something had been injured — something that could scarcely be named, the enchantment, the faith to believe in his young dream against all better judgment. Josephine had already become more the wife than the sweetheart; and the old clan-instinct, which demanded stability in marriage as self-preservation, increased continually in Bonaparte's love. There were still many, many letters after this time, sincere, tender, and confidential — but something that was there before had gone out of them: the poetic, the frantic adoration, the presence of a complete existence in love.

Towards the middle of January 1797 Bonaparte again left Milan. The Austrians were beginning to bestir themselves anew; the decisive battle against the Papal States was to take place; there was much to do, more than ever before. The previous year, on the evening following the battle at Lodi, Bonaparte had been able for the first time to visualize the great realization of his dream, from facts that were incontrovertible. Later he said in St. Helena: "On that day I saw myself for the first time not simply as a general, but as a man who is summoned to bear influence on the fate of a whole people. I saw myself in history." In this knowledge, which demanded the highest and most far-reaching accomplishment, he began the year 1797 with an action never before equalled — the battle of Rivoli. The event was followed by the letter which Hortense reproduces as the first one in her collection and which she significantly dates incorrectly by half a year. It is quoted here as the final note to this period so filled with letters:

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“ Roverbello, 26th Nivôse, Year V [January 15, 1797].

“ I have beaten the enemy. Kilmaine will send you a copy of the report of the battle. I am dead with fatigue. I beg of you to leave at once and go to Verona. I need you, for I believe I am about to be seized with illness. I send you a thousand kisses. I am in bed.”

But a day later, in spite of deep exhaustion and a violent fever, he fights another battle, which compels the surrender of Mantua, then hastens to Bologna to meet Josephine there. In two days he again sets out, is constantly on the road, seizes the papal boundaries, and finally wrests the Treaty of Tolentino from the Pope. Josephine has remained in Bologna and, exaggerating a cold and slight temperature into a serious illness, safeguards herself from being called again by Bonaparte at some inopportune moment. Thus she continually kept him sufficiently worried about her health to make him still aware of her power over him. While Bonaparte was sending his wife the best physicians of Upper Italy, Hippolyte Charles was again at her side as a cure for the real sickness — her longing for Paris. From the very beginning Charles had arranged his military service as comfortably as he could. Thanks to Josephine, he soon had the kind of contact for which he cared a great deal more than for military fame — contact with the administration of the war and not long afterwards with the great purveyors. Apparently he grew too greedy, for he was suddenly tried, and, thanks only to the intercession that was made, he was merely dismissed and not, as were some of his sort, summarily shot. After that he had plenty of time on his hands; he went wherever Josephine called him, and his share in the war consisted chiefly in wearing the uniform of a captain in the regiment of hussars; he no longer stood on its lists, nor did he further await anything from which he could derive gain out of the many profitable victories. Meanwhile he represented Paris to Josephine with abandoned gaiety, and so well

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did he play his role that, when he had to keep out of her sight at times when Bonaparte was there, the longing for the city grew almost unbearable in Josephine's heart.

After peace with the Pope was declared, Bonaparte came to Bologna. The atmosphere of tremendous decisions enveloped him; he was filled with a thousand external realities fermenting into great designs. He seemed to observe everything, and yet to be at the same time almost superhumanly absent. It was difficult any longer even to breathe; it was so uncomfortable that the last remnant of cheer seemed to fade. And with all this he was as affectionate and as hungry for love as ever. Josephine wrote to her daughter Hortense: "Everything is going well with me, my dear Hortense. For the last six days I have had no more fever. In Bologna I was slightly ill. After all, I feel dull in Italy. In spite of all the festivities arranged in my honour, and the flattering reception I receive from the people of this beautiful country, I cannot grow accustomed to being separated so long from my dear children; I feel the need of holding them close to my heart. Meanwhile I have every reason to hope that this moment is no longer very far distant, and the thought contributes greatly to my recovery from the ailment which I have just passed through."

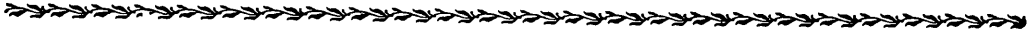
However, this longing for Paris, in the guise of so sudden a maternal love, again was soothed and Josephine remained in Italy quite a long time, in the end very much longer than was necessary. Charles was again hovering round her, and a few very serious eye-witnesses assert that in addition to this lover about whom the whole Italian army, with the exception of the Commander-in-Chief, knew, there were a few others whom Bonaparte, if he had suspected that they could be anything more than idolatrous admirers of Josephine, would have removed with the utmost haste from his wife's surroundings. Hence Josephine certainly did not pass this spring of 1797 in any very lamentable manner, being assuredly neither lonely nor

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without gaiety; this conclusion may easily be drawn from rumours which now began to be circulated and which grew more and more frequent. But as these unusually strange utterances and the source from which they came form an unexpected and very fateful theme in this biography, they must be presented in their connexion, if the lack of proportion between cause and effect can be so called.



## CHAPTER THREE



# DEMANDS FOR POWER

In the proclamation which Bonaparte issued to his soldiers after the occupation of Mantua — the last Austrian point of support in Italy — the result of the campaign to that time is summed up as follows:

“ In fourteen battles and seventy engagements you have carried off the victory. You have taken more than a hundred thousand prisoners, have deprived the enemy of five hundred field-guns and two thousand pieces of heavy artillery. . . .

“ The contributions demanded from the conquered countries have fed the army during the entire period, have supported and paid it; in addition to this you have sent to the Minister of Finance . . . thirty millions.

“ You have enriched the museum in Paris with more than three hundred works of art. . . . You have won for the Republic the most beautiful districts of Europe; the Cisalpine Republic and that of Lombardy are indebted to you for their liberty. . . .”

After the enumeration of these deeds there follows a sentence in which for the first time Napoleon the Emperor appears behind Bonaparte the Consul and General;<sup>1</sup> that is the reference to the fact that the French flags now fluttered for the first time on the coasts of

<sup>1</sup> According to Victor Hugo.

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the Adriatic Sea, only "twenty-four hours distant by navigation from ancient Macedonia." Above all else Napoleon had spoken these words to his own soul, where Alexander and Cæsar abode as living men; with this proclamation he now announced his decision to carry the war into Austria and to wrest peace from the enemy in its own country.

With a speed which equalled the beginning of this fantastic campaign, this decision was carried into effect. In little more than a month the French troops were encamped in Austrian Styria, only a few days' march from Vienna. And scarcely had the capitulation of the Austrians and the preliminary Treaty of Leoben been demanded when Bonaparte again set out on his return to Italy — to Milan, which by this time was almost his capital. The fiery and vehement consciousness of power which had been born in him on the evening at Lodi had become changed and had changed him also: Achievement mounted each day above the military spirit. But in order that it should have complete meaning for him, he must now stand the test of all possible tasks which success might demand. No one else could point them out to him — these tasks that arose and consisted solely in himself together with the problems with which he himself would know how to deal. A wild, restless searching and pondering was going on within him, and those who now met him observed that he had become still more taciturn and that his behaviour and expression possessed a new kind of reserve: even then on his young forehead the vertical wrinkles were often apparent, rising from his thick eyebrows drawn close together; and many who were struck unexpectedly by the steel-blue glance were so frightened that they lost every vestige of security. With folded arms he walked up and down in the post stations, while the horses were being changed, avoiding all conversation — already "*solitario come il carnefice*" (lonely as the hangman), as Raphael is supposed to have said of Michelangelo.

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During these two months before his return to Milan, except for a few brief notes containing essential information, Bonaparte had not written to Josephine. He had organized his war and was conducting it on to its end. His unquenchable greed for the world now drove into his brain the hundreds of thousands of facts from which matters of state and government are made up, for close scrutiny; and threw those with which he had finished into his blood for the new poetry of realities. Josephine was sheltered in the midst of his life in a love grown quiet, as if it had cried itself out; but she no longer went into the poems of his blood. She was there, would remain there, was to be the most splendid part of all that he attained and conquered, but the road leading to his achievements now became his own and he felt no further longing to share it with her.

Day after day the couriers had brought to Milan the news of the onward rushing march and finally of the overthrow of the imperial military forces. And Josephine, running from festivity to festivity, "adorned and eternally surrounded by people like a prostitute" (as Michelangelo is said to have answered Raphael after the anecdote just mentioned), had been the first to receive all the news concerning the military negotiations and the armistice. Charles also came frequently, well informed like all the speculators, bringing the latest news and waiting for whatever was still newer. But by this time it was only very seldom that Josephine could show one of Bonaparte's burdensome letters, which were always so hard to read. And now she began, with all her own nibbling at the love-drug, that fateful and peculiar accusation by which she again daringly painted a devil on the wall where there still remained the lie about her pregnancy.

Josephine seemed all at once to discover that she was jealous of her husband. She complained to Berthier, wrote to Barras; and, not at all discriminating in the choice of her listeners, she told that Bonaparte was in love with another woman and had turned his heart

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away from her. It is true that in the beginning she allowed herself to be easily and willingly soothed, but it filled her with pleasant tearful excitement to give way to these half-playful outbreaks of jealousy, which occurred the more frequently when news of a victory or of some extraordinary new homage to Bonaparte brought to her the consciousness of his position of power, now enhanced beyond all doubt. That in her inmost heart she knew how unfounded all her accusations were helped her but little. For this jealousy was a paraphrase, a translation into fluent feminine language of something which she did not wish to admit, and which she desired to change from an unapproachable inner process into an accusing outer one. She sensed unerringly that her power over Bonaparte, which until now had been the best thing about this marriage — the enormous power which his love had given her — was dwindling. And, over against this incomprehensible thing that vexed, embittered, and troubled her, she accused him of exactly what she herself — of course without giving it any name — had committed as the most natural thing in the world: adultery.

This continued for a while, until Bonaparte again came to Milan, and then, no matter how much she desired it, she could find no further reason for these accusations; it was just some undeniable change in him which she had reduced to the denominator most suitable to her.

But as so very often when Josephine had practised her self-willed domination upon actualities, when in the face of common sense and memory she had turned desire, feeling, and anxiety into facts, then something about it became to her an inner reality and never left her. She had now arranged her own frivolous interpretation to explain that some change was taking place in Bonaparte. And since something actually did happen to him which no physical communion could make any more comprehensible to her, since he gave her no plausible answer to all the questions with which she plied him, as



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a reaction to what was so inexplicable she grew more and more jealous. Little as it may have had to do with love, every feeling within her resisted any change in her position or any decrease in her power and resented as well the inroads of time into conditions which had seemed to her unalterable. She raved and stormed, gave way to her endless whims, rebelled stubbornly (and with a childish attitude of being offended) against the incomprehensible; yet she did not have the least idea of making even the smallest sacrifice or of denying herself any of the dainty indulgences to which she felt she had just as much claim as to Bonaparte's love and constancy.

What was taking place in Josephine's husband during those summer months of the year 1797 had scarcely any connexion with her. "Bonaparte is growing into his success," a contemporary said when speaking of this time. He grew with a weird rapidity. He needed no further testimony of his power than the fact that an emissary of the Bourbons had come to him with unheard-of offers and had tried to win him over to the royalist side. In this one war, he had not only proved his innate genius as a commander and learned to use men as instruments of war — he had become the *leader*. World and men were totally changed for him — and it was this change into a tremendous mystery that became the basis for Josephine's childishly feminine interpretation. Bonaparte's feeling for men had always had something uncanny about it, the quality of a nightmare. It had driven him on toward others like someone from a region in between, someone whose shadowy face is pressed at night against a lighted window behind which the sweet game of life is being played for its own sake. He had then broken into the house of life, and for a while he too had tried to play, had sought to find heart-nourishing soil in love — a Thou for this tremendous I — the one woman who would represent all women to him, as the family had already meant every alliance to be hoped for with men. But scarcely had he found a reception among men when he at once

began to rise above them. And now that he had learned the way to climb, he was again on the outside; at times from the bloody shadow-land of his aims and ideas he cast a wild and sorrowful glance on the ways of mankind, learned clumsily from them the appearance of participating, and snatched with greedy hands for the whole house of life. Meanwhile he lived with Josephine, sat with her at the same table, shared her bed, talked to her about her clothes, about the people whom they knew, of Eugène and Hortense, expressed opinions which any other person perhaps might have uttered, but which nevertheless harmonized with none. The innate laws and necessities of this passionate and unbending Corsican narrowness still kept on working within him and affected all his contacts with the everyday life of men in a way that now became ever more strangely noticeable, the simpler and more human he wished to appear; it was this demoniacal bourgeois class of society that constituted his life among men.

During this summer, while Josephine was writing several letters to her friend Barras in which she complained of her husband's giving her so much cause for jealousy, Bonaparte with the greatest secrecy had begun a correspondence of quite a different kind with Barras. Stronger than ever before and more shrewdly the royalists were commencing their preparations for an overthrow. And Barras felt that a *coup d'état* was again necessary if he wished to keep in power. Once he had planned to bring into his game as a military assistant the brave and upright Hoche — the only one among all the generals who could still have been considered a rival of Bonaparte. But he had not proved to be exactly the right man — and soon afterwards he had died very suddenly, by poison, as rumour declared. Then Barras and Bonaparte, who in addition to this held many other threads in his hands, came to an agreement. The result was the stroke of state policy of the 18th Fructidor, which drove out two of the Directors, one of them Carnot, an essential member

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in the "bringing about of the victories." This considerably heightened the power of Barras and tore away the net which the monarchists were tightening. Bonaparte's glorious name, together with the covering of the flank by his army, had guaranteed the success of this *coup d'état*. And Bonaparte did not hesitate in letting the Directory feel that he was aware of the changed situation. Against the instructions which were received he carried on negotiations for peace with the utmost speed, and on the 17th of October he concluded independently the far-reaching Peace of Campo Formio. It was the first in six years, and the triumphant rejoicing took such complete possession of France that the Directors could not avoid being in accord with the enthusiasm.

Bonaparte's task in Italy had been completed. He was delegated as plenipotentiary to the Congress called in Rastatt, and desired to return to Paris from there. He had hoped to have Josephine at his side on this home-coming, which was to be celebrated as a triumphal procession. But all at once she made up her mind that in nearly the year and a half which she had spent in Italy she had seen far too little of that beautiful country, and above everything else she had never yet been in Rome. Therefore a journey to that city became the excuse for her avoiding the return with Bonaparte; and the hope that this separation would give back to her the power over her husband (which she realized was dwindling) gave a spice to the pleasure of freedom for her.

Josephine instead of going to Rome went to Venice, and she witnessed in that city, which Bonaparte had presented to the Austrians, the time-honoured art of Venetian festivals. Then slowly, very slowly, she started on her way to France. It is not certain whether or not Hippolyte Charles accompanied her on this entire journey, during which the rest days far exceeded the days of travelling; or whether he joined her later and hence contributed to the fact that the last stage of the journey lasted the very longest.

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Bonaparte entered Rastatt with great ceremony in a coach drawn by eight horses and surrounded by an Austrian escort. He returned to Paris on the 5th of December, where such honours were bestowed upon him as the city had not witnessed since the days when it had celebrated the entrance of the young Dauphiness, Marie-Antoinette. He missed Josephine very greatly; amid all this triumphant honour the husband should have had his wife beside him. He lived in Josephine's house in the rue de Chantereine, which in those days, out of homage to him, was called the rue de la Victoire. It was now his house; he bought it soon after his return. It was furnished in the antique style which was becoming more and more the fashion. Bonaparte waited for Josephine, who should have been in Paris at least within a week after his arrival. Receptions and balls were given for him, the Academy honoured him with membership, and in the theatre he was greeted with tumultuous applause whenever he appeared for a minute from the recess of his box. Josephine would have heard all this too. She did not arrive. He waited for her return home as in Italy he had waited for her coming.

The name Bonaparte, which Josephine had at first kept secret so carefully, now preceded her journey, so that along the way she already had a rather rich foretaste of the festivities which were intended for her in Paris. In Lyons she was presented with a wreath of roses for herself and a branch of laurel for her husband, and in the evening there was a festive illumination of the whole city in her honour. Paris waited, waited. The ball which Talleyrand had arranged in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to celebrate her arrival had to be postponed several times, and finally the expense of this reception, which had to be newly prepared each time, amounted to many times the sum which had been allotted to it. And when Josephine finally did arrive and appeared on Bonaparte's arm at this ball — the greatest since the establishment of the Republic — she

was in a state of such uncontrolled bad temper that soon the most malicious remarks went buzzing around the room. Josephine again in Paris and ill-humoured in the midst of such festivity? Had Bonaparte made her so grievously aware of her three weeks' delay? Or were the whispers justified in blaming her anger on the absence of Hippolyte Charles? Or was it simply that she felt tired after the long journey and did not consider herself looking pretty enough for such a great occasion and that her costume with the gold cap seemed to her altogether too much improvised?

A little of the bad temper remained with her for quite a while. In the life in Paris for which she had longed so ardently there was mixed something to which she had given no thought. First of all, there was the feeling of strangeness in all this severe new *décor* of the house; then the realization that Bonaparte now actually lived there too, and that all the social activity which had so delighted her heart would have to be subject to his approval and hence would become ever more and more his. Filled with resentment, Josephine wandered through the rooms which before had been all her own and which now were so completely changed. When guests came, she enjoyed the hospitality imposed upon her only half-heartedly, although there were not a few men among them whom she would have been only too glad to have in her house before. Something within her rebelled — and although the table-talk and the conversation in the drawing-room may have been enlivened with great intellect and charm, with freedom and worldly wisdom, she herself felt inclined to interpret the entire discourse as pedantry and the putting on of airs; of course it was almost all addressed to Bonaparte, even though she too was included. She was certainly fond of men's company, and under other circumstances she would have listened quite willingly to such distinguished persons as Chénier, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Méhul, David, and Talma. But like her friend Barras, who here pretended to be quite different from what

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he really was, she thought that all the other men as well — not only the military subordinates — lost their naturalness in Bonaparte's atmosphere. And she longed to be back at the banquets and feasts with Térézia, whom she now saw so very seldom, and with the Barras of former days; she longed for thoughtless talk animated by champagne, for an unchecked flow of feminine chatter in which dress and love, gossip and small business matters were all entangled in an inspiring web. Against Bonaparte's "mysterious conduct" she now quite consciously set up her own, her zealous incurring of new debts, her Charles, and the plaintive outpouring of her heart to everyone who did not come in contact with Bonaparte. She had a large casket filled with jewellery varying in value and beauty. At times when she was alone, she dragged this about the house with her, rummaged in it greedily, bedecked herself, and played with all kinds of gay little thought-pictures which shoved themselves into her meditations. Her jealousy had by this time rather ebbed away. She pondered diligently upon herself and, in a confused jumble, about freedom, her power over Bonaparte, and many other ideas which in the first maturity of the year after she left the prison she would never have thought of as belonging together. The most unusual contradiction existed within her: she now had a position such as belonged to scarcely any other woman in France; she was daily rather pleased with it, was determined to hold on to it, and yet at the same time rebelled against it. The feeling of stability and safety for which she had yearned did not quite agree with her; the rather considerable allowance granted her annually disturbed her, led her to search for desires which she did not really have and the gratification of which she had forgotten a moment later. Restlessness was within her, extravagance, useless lamenting, annoyance, and greed. She wished Bonaparte away from her. But when he retired into the little room where on many evenings he passed long hours — often until dawn — sitting in the midst of maps, making notes, she was

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always rather offended. She desired freedom, merry times with the amusing little Hippolyte Charles and with the kind of people whom she herself could choose. She did steal a little of that sort of pleasure when Napoleon undertook a tour of inspection along the Atlantic coast, in order to test the possible realization of a desire that had been brewing in him even in Corsica: his dream of punishing England, the enemy, behind her bulwarks of the sea. When he returned, convinced that the immediate execution of such an attack was impracticable, this dream of striking England in its heart had assumed another and still more fantastic form, upon which the machine of his sense of realities now began its precise work. Like the great poets who never allow anything which they have grasped in their youth to escape from their lives until it has taken on complete shape, Bonaparte now translated his Alexander dream of the Orient into the egotistical language of his world-politics; meditating upon it, he had devised the plan of injuring England as a sea and colonial power through the conquest of that country to which Cæsar also had gone and where, according to legend, he had seen the corpse of Alexander.

This time Josephine was not left long in doubt concerning the intentions of her husband. For Bonaparte, who was now made Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Orient, added to the most zealous military preparations some of quite another sort — the main stage for which was laid in his own house. Notable men from nearly every field of science and a number of artists were now, in addition to Bonaparte's aides-de-camp and a few generals, the most frequent guests in the house, and all conversation centred in Egypt.

When therefore the Egyptian campaign was decided upon, it seemed quite natural to Bonaparte that Josephine should accompany him. The Directory could no longer make any regulations about him. Besides he doubtless undertook this campaign with an inner reserve which originated in his former dream concerning the Orient

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and to which he later gave expression: displeased with France, where men of Barras's type still ruled, Bonaparte was ready, in the event of a great military success, to use victory and gain for the aggrandizement of his own power. Therefore Josephine was to be with him.

Josephine had wished him far away, but now that he was preparing to leave for a long period of time, in all the confusion of feelings which had taken place within her since her return to Paris, she was again dissatisfied with his going away. So far as her accompanying him was concerned, she had from the very beginning had no desire whatever to leave France again. But she had already learned that there was little to be gained from discussions with Bonaparte; also that weeping did not appear to promise any success; she had said yes when she definitely meant no: that was the preliminary step in her subsequent method of answering each unforeseen question or unexpected proposal usually with no in order to gain time. Circumstances were favourable to her. She felt rather ill and looked more tired than she really was when she arrived in Toulon with her son Eugène in company with Napoleon. And when the news came that the English fleet was cruising near by and would try to prevent the departure of the expeditionary squadron, Bonaparte decided that Josephine should remain in France for a while, should take the baths and follow him in about two months. She stayed in Toulon until word was received that Napoleon and Eugène, who had gone with him as aide-de-camp, had passed through the danger zone in safety. Then she set out for the watering-place of Plombières. And when Bonaparte recalled at the beginning of his journey how matters previously had gone with Josephine's following him and demanded her immediate departure, she was already on the road. The letter reached her after so much delay that she had no further scruples about not obeying the summons. Bonaparte was by that time too far away.





## CHAPTER FOUR



# THE DISTANT BONAPARTE

*Who has no riches while the summer lasts  
Must always wait and never find himself.  
Rilke*

The author begins this chapter with a longing look at the poets and with a little envy at the biographers who are willing to be served by legend. For in that self-glorified world of the poets Titania may confidently embrace the ass's head — and remain untroubled. And in this region in which one arbitrarily deals with the past the ass can no longer be the ass, or Titania would not embrace him. There is no Hippolyte Charles, or else he becomes an ornament among the youths; and Bonaparte is just enough of a fiend to make a sad and lovely Josephine justified in trying to find comfort for her soul in a young officer who possesses within him something of a Chateaubriand's René or (in Germany) some quality of a Theodor Körner. On the contrary, the author here relating the story must put into this chapter the Josephine that he has learned to understand and that he has tried to make understood. Whatever is yet to follow he cannot balance with the fact that he soon must add a few atrocities of Bonaparte's which became evident not long afterwards; nor can he in the end ever make of this little Charles a young man capable of arousing any sympathy. Hence he turns his eyes away from the poets and from the unfaithful guardians of the actual facts in

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order to look at the mass of life lived by real men through which the chapter now beginning must trace the earthly course of this woman.

Bonaparte's family (of whose relationship to Josephine something must necessarily be said) had, at first waiting cautiously, accepted Napoleon's marriage as if it believed that his union with a woman six years older than himself and in doubtful financial circumstances was really as good a match as it had been represented to them. This opinion, which even at the first did not show much gratification, had rapidly and fundamentally changed since Bonaparte's generous and indefatigable solicitude for his own people shut out any doubt that his much lauded rise to power was not an illusion rewarded by a little fame. Then suddenly in the family, whose strong, clan-like solidarity had been first and foremost in Napoleon's blood and in his aspirations, there arose a growing opposition to the intruder who shared so extravagantly in this young and highly profitable fame, which before all else should fall to the lot of the mother and the brothers and sisters. And when, to the true reports of Josephine's extravagance, were added rumours which could scarcely be doubted concerning her conjugal unfaithfulness, Mother Letizia and the children quickly agreed that Napoleon had been led into a *mésalliance*. How the diverse and rarely tender expressions of this conviction affected Josephine's life is yet to be related.

One of the principal points of attack was Josephine's barrenness, which would have lessened any sympathy Corsicans like Bonaparte's family might have felt even though the wife of their Napoleon had been in other respects a prodigy and had possessed every quality desirable to the clan. The allusions to this barrenness — which Napoleon, poisoned a little by the knowledge, still kept from him, of Josephine's infidelity, had been obliged to hear — formed the real cause for her taking the baths at Plombières; Napoleon thus

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promised himself the removal of this misfortune, which Josephine at first did not wish to think of as an evil.

On the way to Plombières, in Lyons, Josephine met Hippolyte Charles, who, besides tender messages, had received another inducement for hurrying to this rendezvous.

The capital which his relation to the wife of the mightiest General in the Republic bestowed upon him had helped Charles to become a partner in a trading company whose army contracts had promised to provide him with a larger income than he could ever have hoped to gain from his former varied undertakings. But all at once this Company Bodin ceased to receive the government orders which supported it, seemingly because an honest General, Brune, had warned the Directory of these usurious contracts. Matters then fared extremely badly with the company, and Charles came to ask Josephine for help, appealing affectionately to their friendship and to a common interest of which it was better for people not to hear. As if in protest against the unaccustomed security afforded her through a large income regularly received, Josephine during her few months in Paris had so zealously added new debts to the old ones that she welcomed every little bit of money with which she could temporarily appease a threatening jeweller, a pressing dry-goods merchant or perfumer. How, then, could she refuse a share in the profits of the Company Bodin when she had contributed to the organization of its business through the recommendations she had given to Charles? Scruples? Would not everybody who could, take advantage of such an opportunity? No, she belonged to this world — this world of the Directory, which had so luxuriantly blossomed forth from the blood pools of misery in all mankind — where everyone had learned to “think practically.” Did Bonaparte have scruples when he took a part of the contributions? Or perchance Barras, who squandered the money of the Republic and its rich clients, as well as the money of its enemies the royalists? When a few

months later Fouché, who with public money bought all the secrets which promised him an increase of underground power, offered to buy from Josephine the news which came from Egypt concerning Bonaparte for a considerable monthly stipend, she consented to this opportune transaction unhesitatingly. And she would probably have been very greatly astonished and would have burst into tears, sincerely believing herself wronged, if anyone had tried to tell her that this was not quite a proper business — exactly as Bonaparte's secretary and friend Bourrienne, and so many others close to him, were convinced of their right to the sums and privileges for which they were bought.

So Josephine wrote a passionate letter filled with intercessions for the Company Bodin and brimming over with anger at the awful trouble-maker General Brune; she wrote to Barras, the good Barras, to whom she was accustomed to commend, through incessant letters, the interests of all who came close to her (if he had always listened to her, half the positions of importance would have been held by protégés of Josephine). Charles, who now was pacified, accompanied Josephine to Plombières. But before she had even begun her treatments, something happened which necessitated a cure of quite another sort. She was having visitors, as she almost always did; an acquaintance stepped out on a small balcony and called Josephine to see a little dog that was just passing. The other guests stepped out on the balcony with Josephine. Suddenly the floor gave way, and Josephine and her guests fell about six yards down to the street-level.

From the orgy of remedies which raged around the illustrious patient, including the most modern as well as the most superstitious means (for example, the wrapping of her bruised hip in the skin of a sheep slaughtered *ad hoc*), which then quickly became public knowledge, it is certain that Josephine did indeed suffer painful contusions, but no other serious injuries. There is, to be sure, such

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a flood of plaintive self-pity in the mass of letters which she sent during that time that the recipients of these messages must have derived the impression that her life was dangerously threatened; the intention conveyed in her letters to Bonaparte, that she would follow him to Egypt soon after her recovery and in spite of all that had happened, seemed like a heroic sacrifice which no one could reasonably accept. This intention continued to be one for so long that its accomplishment was unnoticeably changed into a return to Paris.

For the last time Josephine now felt Paris to be a city after her own heart, holding all her unfulfilled longings — and perchance those also which could never be fulfilled — from her first arrival as a young girl from far-distant Martinique, from her departure from the convent of Panthémont, and as a prisoner from the Maison des Carmes; these were all vaguely alive and must here be stressed in an anticipatory manner. For uneconomical as it would be for a writer to dwell particularly on the small points of a historical anecdote, such a reference is necessary in the long and rather confused story of a life where the climax — if there is one — is usually found somewhere near the middle or a little later, but only very rarely as the life ends on the death-bed. It has been remarked in the course of this biography that the author, had he been writing a novel, would have begun with Josephine at the age of thirty years, with that great and stormy summer — the real and complete period of Josephine's life, to which everything said before was but reference and preparation. Now that this presentation has reached her thirty-fifth year, the narrator begs to remark that he would have finished his romance of Josephine with what this chapter has to record in quite unromantic fashion: with the unmistakably fatal point which can have but one meaning; it left a mark after which her reckless behaviour coloured and disguised her maturing years, though she would gladly have made of these middle thirties a life-eternity.

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As the biographer has already begun with anticipating the future, he cannot avoid introducing this fatal return to Paris, so unnoticed by Josephine herself, with a name which from now on belongs to the picture of her life almost more than the names Tascher, Beauharnais, or even Bonaparte: the name Malmaison. Into whatever small and petty things the progress and failure of this life may from this time forward resolve itself, something has remained alive: great charm foolishly wasted, and the tragic resentment at growing old and not being able to surrender, all of which now commences and has its first faint growth in the legend. And this legend, which has retained so little of the real earthly pilgrimage of Josephine, is nourished by the present existence of Malmaison, the lasting growth of the trees in the park, the blooming of plants from the Antilles — the first seedlings of which Josephine planted within the precincts of Paris — in the continuance of the playfully severe rooms, the appearance of art, the sensitive coquetry of nature and decoration, all of which taken together, in the whole place that so resembles a museum, still remain Malmaison and Josephine today.

For many years Josephine had known Malmaison at a distance. From the windows of the country-house in Croissy she could see, through the trees of the park, the tall roof of the château and some of the surrounding buildings; she herself declared that she wished to own it. There is an unconfirmed statement that Bonaparte, who in fact did intend to acquire a country estate, had on his return from Italy commenced negotiations for the purchase of Malmaison, but that these had failed on account of the high price. It is certain that Josephine soon after the return to Paris had entered into communication with the owner of Malmaison and his legal adviser. And as at that time she had nothing but debts, and as, for reasons which will soon be told, her brother-in-law Joseph suddenly became very slow about paying her the sums allowed her by Bonaparte, she saw no further obstacle to the high purchase-price, because she would

not be able to pay it anyway. The clause dealing with division of property so carefully inserted at her instance in their marriage contract would have required the consent of her husband in the event of a sale. Therefore Josephine determined to conclude the purchase in her own name. The price of the château together with all the modest, old-fashioned bourgeois furniture as well as for the one hundred and twenty-nine hectares of land amounted, including the commission, to about three hundred thousand francs. When the first payment of fifteen hundred francs was due, Josephine received it as a loan from the manager of the estate. Other sums came from Barras, if his memoirs are to be believed. And scarcely was the purchase completed and a fraction of the price paid down after this fashion when Josephine at once prepared to establish herself in Malmaison. In the house whose name is so indissolubly tied to hers she did not begin by living alone. Hippolyte Charles, who since the days at the Palazzo Serbelloni in Milan had shared several dwellings with Josephine, went with her to Malmaison. And in his company she undertook her first journeys of discovery through the newly acquired property, the meadows and small forests, the vineyards, which under the more friendly sun of those days bore abundant fruit in the environs of Paris. Soon the gossip of the neighbours and of visitors who had seen Charles disappear at their approach carried the news to Paris that Bonaparte's wife was now living only a few miles from the capital with her lover, of whose existence so many already knew. The family of Bonaparte was not among the last to hear the report.

That the Bonaparte family occupied a peculiar position in regard to Josephine must already be clear (from the many references made in previous chapters) even to those unacquainted with the actual historical personage of Josephine. If nevertheless nothing more definite has been said about this state of affairs, it is because her marriage with Bonaparte had not until now really been drawn into the heart

of her life, and consequently the increasingly more perceptible interest in the marriage could be neglected by this biography as it was neglected by Josephine herself. Although the real account of these family affairs must be allotted to the chapters of this book still remaining, it must now be said by way of information that in this family relationship with Josephine, after several barometric fluctuations, there developed a deep resentment, which was scarcely able basically to be explained by the cohabitation of Josephine and Charles, because this no longer incurred very much surprise. The connexion of all the Bonapartes to Napoleon may have been vampirically lacking in love, but since he became the life-giving heart of this family body, all the members felt each movement of the centre of their being hypochondriacally enough; indeed, often at times they prophetically divined it.

Just at the time when Josephine had bought Malmaison and had dedicated it with a frolicsome honeymoon, within Josephine's husband something quite as significant had happened in regard to love and marriage as to his fate as a dreamer after might and leadership.<sup>1</sup>

While the adventurous campaign across the sea, controlled by a powerful enemy's fleet, into a country which to Europe was more

<sup>1</sup> The chief events in the Egyptian campaign are, briefly stated, the following: three weeks after the start, Malta was taken in one day; June 30, landing in Egypt; July 2, capture of Alexandria; July 21, battle of the Pyramids; July 25, entry into Cairo; so that, in hardly a month, Egypt was conquered. The reverses began on August 1, with the annihilation of the French fleet at Abukir by the English under Nelson. In September Turkey declared war on France. In October the insurrection of the people in Cairo was suppressed with bloodshed. In order to anticipate a Turkish attack against Egypt from Syria, Bonaparte in February 1799 began his campaign against Syria. March 7 marked the capture of Jaffa, the slaughter of several thousand prisoners. After the vain siege of Akka (Saint-Jean d'Acre) on May 20 came the retreat to Egypt. On July 25 was the victorious battle at Abukir over the Turks, supported by the English. On August 23 Bonaparte left Egypt.

During his absence the greater part of Italy conquered by him was again lost. On August 15, 1799 came the unfortunate battle at Novi, in which the Commander-in-Chief Joubert was killed.

Meanwhile the composition of the Directory had changed, and Sieyès now had a seat in it.



mythical than actually historical, and whose stormy capture — in spite of the inconsequential Syrian undertaking — made Bonaparte even more famous than his Italian campaign, he himself, in view of the barrenness of a victory requiring so many sacrifices, had grown weary of his greater Orient dream and saw himself again and with finality relegated to France. The news which he had received was scanty and in many ways highly contradictory; thus he could not then fully estimate the enormous fame that had come to him from this undertaking, and had to content himself with the hope that close scrutiny would show him at the proper time how he would have to deal with this France. It fared differently with him concerning the painful confusion of his feelings caused by his marital affairs; while in Egypt, clarity and a wise decision seemed to dawn upon him. It cannot be ascertained from which members of the Bonaparte family came the allusions to Josephine's behaviour, which could scarcely be misinterpreted any longer. Bourrienne asserts that Bonaparte in his uncontrolled jealous rage and mortification had placed Junot on watch — Junot, his first aide-de-camp of those days when in his shabby coat he was a brigadier-general without pay; Junot was his friend, and now, through having been married to Laura Permon — the daughter of the Madame Permon whom Bonaparte himself had once wooed — he belonged to Josephine's inner circle and must have known all that was taking place, all those happenings which everyone seemed to know except the man whom they most concerned. Bourrienne, Bonaparte's secretary, reports in his memoirs that Junot, driven by extremity, finally was compelled to admit what he could no longer conceal.<sup>1</sup> It was not Bonaparte's custom to await the maturity of a decision in worry or brooding; in this case he would do so least of all, where

<sup>1</sup> Junot swears (like Berthier) that he told Bonaparte nothing. If one wishes to draw conclusions from the characters of those concerned in the discussion, it is most probable that Bourrienne himself had talked.

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a wound early inflicted and always torn open again seemed to him by this present certainty as if cauterized by red-hot iron and finally eschared. For the first time we learn that he who had shyly kept secret any probable flighty adventure along his path of victory now was seen ever more and more frequently with a young, pretty, and sparkingly vivacious blonde name Pauline Fourès. She was the wife of a lieutenant of the rifles, who was forthwith sent to Europe. In accordance with the fashion of bestowing epithets in those days, this beautiful lady was called "Our Queen of the Orient" by the army. Bonaparte is supposed to have discontinued his rides in public with her only, it is said, when it was reported to him how very unhappy Josephine's son, Eugène, had been made by them.

As to Bonaparte's state of mind after he received the certain information about Josephine's unfaithfulness, the following letter to his brother Joseph bears witness: ". . . I expect to reach France in two months. I lay my interests at your heart. I have a great deal of domestic worry, for the veil is now completely lifted. You are all that is left to me on earth, your friendship is very dear to me, and I have only to lose it and realize that you have betrayed me, to become an enemy of all mankind. . . . It is a sad situation to have every variety of feeling for one and the same person contained within one heart . . . you understand me. See to it that on my return I shall have a country-seat ready for me either near Paris or in Burgundy; I intend to pass the winter there in seclusion, for I am weary of humanity. I am in need of solitude and retirement; greatness bores me, and all feeling is dried up within me. At the age of twenty-nine years fame has already grown stale for me; I have drained everything; nothing any longer remains except to turn into an egotist. I intend to keep my house, I shall never give it up to anyone. I have just enough to live on. Farewell, my only friend; I have always been faithful to you, and you must now award me

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justice in spite of the desire of my heart to be so . . . you understand me.”

At this period of gloomy resolutions Bonaparte read a great deal, and among the annotations he made there is the following in a philosophical tale by Mercier: “ In the midst of the glittering festivities held in his honour he heard a voice that whispered to him: ‘ *You shall die in exile and oblivion.* ’ ”

In the end everything seems to point to the fact that the youth and charm of this blonde, Madame Fourès, succeeded only in enflaming a sensual fire that was not very lasting within Bonaparte, and the defiant attitude of a rather boyish suffering had caused him to parade this adventure, certainly not very comforting, before his whole army because he believed it knew of his shame and sorrow. Hence it may not have been at all difficult for him to renounce this publicity for the sake of the young Eugène, especially since he had entered into a peculiar relationship with this eighteen-year-old son of Josephine, who had always been very dear to him. In his mixture of feelings there existed together just as much of what today is called transference as of his eagerness to find a partisan in a creature so close to Josephine; he had made Eugène his confidant and hence had thrown this honest youth into a violent inner confusion, for Eugène was filled as much with love for his mother as he was with boyish enthusiasm for his young stepfather. But, for all his combination of innocence and early acquired knowledge of the world, this youth was sufficiently a child of his time to know that almost all the women whom he met had had lovers or still had them. Thus the problem of his mother’s adultery, which so completely upset the greatly admired Bonaparte, may have appeared to him as a practical one which in due time would enable his mother to prove her so often tested power in the thing which seemed gathering to an ever more threatening decision. Eugène at first seemed to

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have hoped that Josephine, as had been planned, would come to Egypt and calm the offended feelings of her suffering husband before his resolution to dissolve the marriage had taken deep root within him and also before the Bonaparte family in their aversion to Josephine should instigate further opposition against her. Hence he wrote to his mother: “. . . For the past five days Bonaparte has seemed very sad, and this is the result of a conversation he had with Julien, Junot, and even Berthier; he was really more affected by their words than I could have believed. Everything I heard reverted to the fact that Charles went with you in your carriage three post stations on the way to Paris, that you saw him there, that you were with him at the Italian Opera in a box on the fourth tier, that he gave you your little dog and is living with you now; this in a desultory fashion is all that I have understood. You can easily imagine, Mother, that I do not believe all this, but it is certain that the General is very much shocked by it. Meanwhile he doubles his kindness to me. He seems to wish to say by his acts that the children must not be held responsible for the faults of their mother. But your son is inclined to believe that all this gossip has been invented by your enemies; hence he loves you none the less and desires nothing so much as to embrace you. I hope that everything will be forgotten when you come. . . .”

But when this letter was being written, Josephine was quite as far from any intention of undertaking the journey to Egypt as she was from Egypt itself. And this letter, which presumably would have induced her to take the journey, did not reach its goal any more than did the one cited above which Bonaparte wrote to his brother a day later. The mail-ship was captured by an English cruiser, and a series of the letters which were found were published in England during the same year; thus many readers of this indiscretion had a clearer idea of what was gathering over Josephine's head than she herself, though she was thus threatened and warned.

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Joseph likewise never received the message which would have provided him with the grip he so wished for against the sister-in-law he so cordially hated and on the grounds of which he would certainly have considered instituting a divorce. Still he at least did not need to buy the country-seat from the money entrusted to him by his brother, but he disposed of it in such an arbitrary fashion that from the considerable fortune given over to his care almost nothing was left for Napoleon in the end. But owing to the secret tracking and spying through which the Bonaparte family always sought to create new connexions for correspondence, some news concerning Napoleon's change of mind apparently reached his brothers and sisters. For otherwise Joseph would never have dared go so far in carrying out his brother's interests that, while he bought a country estate for himself and expended the greatest amounts on the family, he withheld ever longer from Josephine the money allotted to her. Since Bonaparte continued to remain away and since, following the annihilation of the French fleet at Abukir, the news concerning him became more and more uncertain and exaggerated, no one really knew whether he would ever return. Hence Josephine had the best time possible with the Bonaparte family, because all its members stayed away from her, and their plots and intrigues remained as yet unknown to her. Napoleon, with whom she had spent altogether not more than a year, had become for her one of those abstract ideas, as for instance a title whose advantages one enjoys. And the cheerful and enlivening concrete Hippolyte Charles was now a matter of course, as he had been for almost two years, only still more undisturbed. Around Bonaparte there grew a new song, strange and weird, an epic of sudden victory and great adventure; and the young Eugène had also a place in this epic world, with its crossing of deserts amid burning thirst, its wild skirmishes, its frightful slaughter of thousands, plague, and the despair of men cut off from return home. But Josephine lived as she had lived through all the years.

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Only perhaps a little more restlessly, because the form and meaning of this life — that which really mattered and on which everything depended — was used up ever more rapidly. And as once she felt the guillotine threatening her, so now she feared the day when men would no longer desire her, in the end perhaps not even Bonaparte.



CHAPTER FIVE



## DECISIONS

Bonaparte had been absent from France about thirteen months. Now and then he of course received news, toward the end even a packet of English and German newspapers; but nothing had made clear to him the far-reaching occurrences in that land which henceforth was to become for him entirely his own. What he heard was merely enough to increase his anxiety. No further glory was to be achieved in Egypt; the generals who remained had conquered enough of Upper and Lower Egypt to serve as a counteraction to the utterly inexplicable failure in Asia Minor and had established peace. The blow against the Turks at Abukir had been a success, and Bonaparte could therefore take something fresh back with him to produce a full effect. Hence he hesitated no longer and left "the big mousetrap Egypt." It is an acknowledged fact that, avoiding a meeting with Kléber, he had given over to him in writing the command and responsibility of the army remaining behind, knowing that in the end no victory could prevent capitulation; also that he embarked in great secrecy with several hundred travelling companions. On the 23rd of August the ship left Alexandria and fought for three weeks against contrary winds, until its return to port seemed almost unavoidable. On the 1st of October it was finally obliged to take refuge in the Bay of Ajaccio.

In the seven days which Bonaparte was forced to pass on his native island, the picture which the world was painting of him had begun to take definite form. People came running in swarms from all the villages, claiming to be his relatives. So many children called him godfather that Bourrienne declares the impression to have been made that Bonaparte must have stood as godfather to a fourth of all the children in Corsica. Therefore the Egyptian campaign, according to all these promising signs, had had a very great effect. Soon there would be proof in France — in that France which was now to need him more than ever before. For at Ajaccio no further doubt was left in his mind that the new Russian-English-Austrian coalition had been successful in every theatre of war, and that the Italy which he had conquered was almost completely lost. The news of the defeat at Novi was the last which he had received. The brave Joubert had fallen, but all that this meant to Bonaparte was one important rival less.

From Ajaccio quite a long time was still required to reach the French coast. Bonaparte was consumed with restlessness. When they played *vingt et un*, he cheated at cards and then gave back the money he had won: he was less able than before to bear any turn of luck against him. His tribute to unhappiness he thought his unfortunate marriage had paid, the thorns of which, so deeply imbedded in his heart, had not yet completely ulcerated out from his life. But now there must be an end to this for him; there were only the unavoidable formalities to be gone through with, and then Josephine would be but a fragment of his past, just as little Madame Fourès had become.

Shortly before they reached the Gulf of Juan, where Bonaparte fifteen years later stepped on French soil for the last time, an English squadron sighted the ship. But luck was with him. Forty-eight days after the departure from Alexandria he went on shore in Fréjus. The wild demonstration which had already acclaimed him in the



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harbour encouraged him to break through the strict quarantine regulations. And France also had luck with his arrival, in the fact that the several hundred people who, together with a great deal of luggage, came from plague-infected regions did not bring along with Napoleon Bonaparte a death-dealing pestilence into the country.

Bonaparte above all else had taken care that news of his victory at Abukir should be spread abroad before the announcement of his coming. The days that followed, with their triumphal processions through France, would in themselves make a story which, with its concentrated multiplicity of motives, it would be a temptation to relate. From the very first there was wonderful enthusiasm over the return. The peasants lined the roads, ran beside the carriage at night carrying torches, both in token of homage and as protection against the robber bands which had prowled about on marauding expeditions through the provinces already drained by war; in spite of all the precautions taken by Bonaparte with regard to them, the separate luggage that followed him became their booty. Even the poorest hamlets displayed flags; often the tricolour was patched together out of a few rags. From one stage of the journey to the next, Bonaparte more and more clearly realized the genuineness of France at this time, from all the acclaim, from what his eyes beheld, from the hope in him so excitingly expressed. Hatred against the Directory and its emissaries was everywhere evident — against those who had passed such nonsensical laws (enacted meanwhile among so many others <sup>1</sup>): for example, the hostage law, requiring from all families suspected of counter-revolution the giving of hostages; as a consequence of this, thousands who had begun to get adjusted to the Republic, driven from their domiciles, had joined the royalist bands or formed new ones. And another law, which, without the

<sup>1</sup> In five years the republican government had issued more than thirty-four hundred laws.

power of an effective execution, had prescribed a progressive property tax, brought about the result that many new and uncontrollable fortunes quickly took flight; while the great bankers who only a short time before had proved their financial position by guaranteed loans now saw their capital shrink and felt their sympathies for such a Republic dwindle in the same proportion. To the military defeats, to the borders threatened by the enemies, and simultaneously to the strengthening of all party-disagreements in view of the shortcomings of the government were added the growth of royalism as well as of Jacobinism, spreading terror to right and left. Such was the France which Bonaparte rapidly traversed and which had named him "*l'Italique*" and "*l'Egyptiaque*." The Pope had called him his dear son, and the High Sheriff of Mecca, the protector of the Kaaba, had acclaimed him as a saviour sent by fate. Napoleon also learned that since matters had fared ever worse with the affairs of war, just as with those of state, the people were obsessed with the idea that he had been removed from the country by the intrigues of the government. A hundred smaller instances — such as the one of the wretchedly poor woman who had promised to donate a few francs to the Church if only he returned — showed him how he had been awaited and longed for beyond the wildest dreams. If in that time he had felt in his heart the words he expressed much later: that France was his only beloved, he would for once in his existence have experienced the *καιρός*, the right moment of love. But in the heart of him who was triumphantly acclaimed as the "saviour" of liberal ideas, there glowed another fire than love.

Eugène had sent word of their arrival to his mother by the courier who had hurried on ahead from Fréjus, probably because he wanted her to make use of this advance news by meeting Bonaparte before the members of his family could fortify him completely in his decision, which was growing ever more painful, to bring about a separation. Something must have been in the air which brought

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even to Josephine's consciousness the possibility of Bonaparte's sudden return; for she began in her official contacts to choose such people as would not displease her husband. Thus for instance she had cultivated a couple named Gohier, who certainly bored her exceedingly. Gohier had very recently been made chairman of the Directory; this brave revolutionary citizen, enraged over the now irrefutable rumours about her, had once seriously advised her to get a divorce and marry Charles. Josephine went to see them more and more frequently, invited the two of them to her house, and one day said, with a naïveté which was quite contrary to her usual cleverness, that she hoped Bonaparte would appreciate seeing her in close contact with such honest people.

Nevertheless the news of the landing in Fréjus came like the trumpet of judgment. Josephine seemed to lose her head completely; and one of her old acquaintances, Réal, had trouble in making it clear to her that if she still cared anything about her marriage, her only salvation lay in hastening to meet Bonaparte before her brothers-in-law, doubtless fully informed, could reach him. That Barras had persuaded her to do this in order to make sure of Bonaparte as a confederate (as has been declared) is of little probability; first, because Josephine was not on good terms with Barras at that time, and, second, because, in his self-complacent security, Barras did not believe he needed a confederate nor did he imagine that in case of necessity the little Bonaparte could cause him any difficulties.

The great high road coming from the south divided at Lyons; one branch led through Burgundy to Paris, the other through the Bourbonnais. The second seems to have been the more frequently used. Was that the reason that Bonaparte from the very beginning decided on the first? Bourrienne's mother and wife lived in Sens, which was situated near it; he had sent them word that he would rest there for a little while during a brief repast. Josephine, how-

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ever, had taken the other road, and travelled tearfully to meet the storm. Every carriage appearing in the distance made her heart tremble. Yet Bonaparte was in none of them. So she arrived at Lyons in misery and despair to find the joyful excitement fading, the festive reception and farewell to the man on his way home dying out; she there heard the first fabulous reports of the triumphal procession of her husband through Provence and was filled with the depressing thought that she might perhaps be for ever excluded from all this grandeur. The return was filled with anxiety and also embittered by the fear that her brothers-in-law might have been more fortunate in their choice of the road, and that Bonaparte might already have received all their spiteful reports.

Contradictions in the notations and memoirs which tell about those days do not allow us to determine accurately whether or not Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte also missed their brother on the way, and whether it was not until he reached Paris that Napoleon was more definitely informed of Josephine's living with Charles at Malmaison. It is certain, however, that no detail known to anyone was kept from him.

Bonaparte's skill in managing that his return should be made particularly effective by sending ahead the message of the victory at Abukir found unexpectedly powerful aid in the most fortunate circumstances. Almost simultaneously with the news of his triumph the first messengers to arrive in a long time came with announcements of the military success of the French army, of the significant victory at Bergen and the decisive one at Zürich. This coincidence at first seemed to him unfavourable, but Bonaparte soon observed that the achievements of Brune and Masséna were of remarkable advantage to him. It was like a loving wife who in her own feelings naturally associates with her long-awaited husband all the lucky incidents that may happen on the day of his return.

During the early morning of October 16 Bonaparte arrived in

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Paris quite unnoticed and went directly to the rue Chantierine, which for the past two years had borne the name rue de la Victoire in his honour. " He found the house again (where after the Italian expedition he had sheltered his restless glory), but seemingly in a new quarter, quiet, only little built up, and bordered by cheerful green. . . . The first room, in the form of a semicircle, the drawing-room with its Pompeian paintings, the work-room with a view over the quite lovely garden, where the trees were beginning to lose their leaves, and the pallor of antique vases stood out in relief against the rust-colour of the foliage. He saw again the quarters where he and Josephine had lived as husband and wife, the furniture with its extravagant taste for hero-worship, tabourets shaped like a drum, the bed in the form of a tent, backs of chairs like the bows of old warriors, with quivers at the sides — everywhere the furniture expressed affectation and peculiarities. A luxury designed for show, a disorderly jumble of objects of art and of vanities which, taken all together, reminded one of Josephine and bore her imprint." <sup>1</sup>

Although Bonaparte had no doubts about the reason for his not finding Josephine in Paris, yet his sorrow and anger increased as he viewed the empty house — an anger beneath which there lay the unconfessed hope of a young man who had waited to the very last for some miracle of love. He could no longer hold out anything in Josephine's favour before his brothers and especially his mother, Letizia — this woman who had become hard and narrow through years of struggle and want and to whom Josephine's adultery seemed at least equally atrocious with her extravagance. What remained for Bonaparte to settle with Josephine was merely a legal transaction, and that would be sufficient. For Josephine herself had chosen the very shortest form of marriage contract and the one easiest to dissolve; hence the divorce, like thousands of others in those days,

<sup>1</sup> According to Vandal.

would also be easy. The house belonged to him, he had bought it. He wished, however, that he did not need to think of all that struck him so incessantly in this abode: the images of her, the feminine fragrance, the sounds that were so frightening.

Bourrienne tells of a conversation in those days which Bonaparte is said to have had with Collot about Josephine and her very widely known misbehaviour. “ ‘ Between her and me,’ said Bonaparte, ‘ there is nothing more in common.’ ‘ What, you wish to leave her? ’ ‘ Hasn’t she deserved it? ’ ‘ I don’t know about that, but is this the proper time to worry yourself about it? Think instead of France, with her eyes turned upon you. She is expecting you to give every moment of your time to saving her; when it becomes known that you are exciting yourself about domestic problems, your greatness will vanish and you will be nothing in the eyes of France but a husband *à la Molière*. Leave the wrongdoing of your wife aside for the present; if you are not pleased with her, you can send her away when you have nothing else to do. But begin by helping the State. . . . ’ ‘ No, I am determined about this; she can never again set foot in this house. What do I care what people say about it? They will gossip over us for a day or two, but by the third day no one will any longer be interested. . . . My wife goes to Malmaison, and I will remain here. The public knows enough so that it will not be deceived as to the reasons for her removal.’ Upon Collot’s remark that Bonaparte was evidently still in love with her and of course would forgive her, the latter replied: ‘ I forgive her? Never! You know me well enough. If I were not sure of myself, I would pluck my heart out of my body and throw it into the fire.’ ”

Greatly as the exaggeration of this last remark seems to strengthen the opinion of Collot, there is no further recorded conversation about Josephine during that period. And when we consider how tremendously Bonaparte’s time was then occupied, we must take for granted that there was scarcely any room left for even brief

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soliloquies devoted to her. His private life had to cease, fateful days were ahead of him, decisions never before equalled had to be made; everything at the moment had to be understood, taken hold of, and made to be of service. The whole actual existence of the Republic had a suspicious smell; whispers, murmurings, and sneaking investigations haunted it with an evil secrecy; so that before Bonaparte had even seen the men and the institutions which embodied the State, he divined the condition of things and realized also that the majority of them looked upon his coming otherwise than did the masses who so suddenly had begun to believe in him. These masses in ten years of ever new overthrows, wars, *coups d'état*, through hopes frustrated again and again which led into ever deeper misery, finally became like poorly fed animals, abused and long tortured, and were so dulled that they paid not even the slightest attention to the very worst threats or the greatest alarms. The fact that this well-nigh stupefied population of France had really been awakened by his coming was less to be mistaken in Paris than it had been in the provinces which he had traversed.

In the graphic and very alive memoirs of General Thiébault it is related how Paris took the news of Bonaparte's return. Thiébault had gone into the garden of the Palais Royal and at the opposite end saw groups of people gathering and dispersing unceasingly; they obviously surrounded someone who was relating something to them; immediately individual members of the groups hurried away to spread whatever news had just been heard. One of them yelled to him: "General Bonaparte has landed in Fréjus." In different ways he read the news on all faces and found the streets everywhere crowded with surging masses unable to move. Regimental music filled the city with blaring sounds of rejoicing, and the accompanying masses marching in step kept growing continually. "The Directory announced the news to the legislative bodies through a messenger who was preceded by martial music; the word spread with

the speed of electricity. At every street-corner the scene at the Palais Royal was re-enacted. When night came, festive illuminations were improvised in all quarters, and triumphant shouts proclaimed this unexpected as well as longed-for return both to the Republic and to Bonaparte. In all the theatres people sought out their friends to talk about the wondrous return; they visited in one another's homes as if to offer congratulations; and the enthusiasm and exuberance which so seldom enlivened Paris spread quickly over the whole of France. . . .”

Although it has been said that one of the representatives of the people, whose name was Baudin, died of joy over Bonaparte's return, yet the latter himself discovered only a few small sparks of pure friendly pleasure at his home-coming. For amid the confused and painful cordiality of the official reception three varying conspiracies were already brewing in the mind of the government. Bonaparte therefore simply drew his conclusions from the unpopularity of the whole régime, all the more so because he knew that months before when there was a proposal to recall him, the answer had been an almost unanimous decision to let him stay where he was, inasmuch as the greatest political interests were thus to be best served. He soon was altogether as little in doubt concerning the sentiments of the men with whom above everyone else he had to deal as with those of Bernadotte, the Minister of War, who had just been forced to resign. Bonaparte very well knew that Bernadotte had wanted to courtmartial him on the grounds of desertion and breaking of the quarantine regulations; yet he did not avoid him and even in those days arranged meetings with him. Whatever necessary knowledge he still may have needed relative to the entangled disorder of plans for riot and intrigue was given him by Talleyrand, who knew almost as much as Fouché. Moreover, the position of power which his brother Lucien held served as a considerable source of information; Lucien of course had Bonaparte to thank for everything and was soon made president of the great council.



Although the history of those decisive days cannot be related here, the essential things which Bonaparte pictured to himself when he resolved upon quick action, in advance of all the others, must be at least indicated. That he did not think much of Barras, in spite of his apparent friendship and his obligation of gratitude, would not have prevented him from taking this man along into his bargainings had it been in any way worth while. But Barras was already "*sputtاناتو*," as the Italians say of a business project that has already been offered everywhere. Barras had no secure foothold in any of the many combinations, except in the royalist movement, which Bonaparte did not deem worthy of consideration — the movement which held on to the extravagant and foppish Barras because he had convinced the misinformed agents or fellow conspirators of his importance — a thing of which he alone was sure. As the large Jacobin group also was of necessity excluded, only one alliance remained for Bonaparte, and he was in need of political support: the one with Sieyès and his followers. That he did not like this abbé in the least, and that such an alliance really went against his nature, were weakened as an objection by the fact that the latter not only had planned the most intelligently organized attack against the worn-out Constitution of the Year III, but apparently was also willing, after several inconsequential contacts with other generals, to try the most popular commander of France. Bonaparte thought of Sieyès as the royalist informant did when he wrote to the Pretender: "Sieyès is a gloomy, almost unsociable man. He is dismally absorbed in his own ideas and unable to defend them, and he never understands what is meant by reverting to a frustrated opinion; he conceals love as well as hatred. In the affairs of state he is nothing other than a caustic hypocrite, and an orator whose words are veiled in mystery." Bonaparte readily foresaw that a man who, thanks to these qualifications and as a member of the Convention, had escaped the guillotine would be useful as a shrewd jurist, and that, owing to a deeply rooted bourgeois belief in au-

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thority, he would not need to be feared as an accomplice in an overthrow.

When after the third day of a sixteen-hour strain on all his faculties Bonaparte, completely exhausted, had retired, there was a knocking at the door of his room. Josephine, who had just left her carriage, dressed in travelling clothes, demanded admission. The great fatigue resulting from her days of hurried travel, so filled with excitement, disappointment, and misery, had vastly lessened her fears of this meeting: what cared she about Charles and all that? She simply wanted to be home, back in her own home, in the house where they had lived together. When she wanted to return, she could not understand how anything could interfere. So she knocked at the door, which was locked; she knocked again, ever louder, ever more impatiently, for there was no reply. He was inside the bedroom; she knew that from the servants. Then he surely ought to answer, ought to open the door! Her hands already were hurting. She called his name again and again; she put her ear to the door. It was strangely quiet in the room, and no light was burning. Her fear returned, more dreadful than ever. Must she go out again into the cold night, and if so, where? Where, indeed? To Malmaison? But that was so far away. Then a plaintive confusion took possession of her mind: Malmaison unpaid for, the debts, fewer and fewer people coming to see her, loneliness, want, the necessity of selling her jewels, being utterly unloved. She never wanted to see Charles again. If only she had not . . . She still stood in front of the door weeping, and knocking feebly. She was entirely without hope, and now that everything seemed lost, the strange tragic paradox of the heart started its work; for the first time the little man inside, with whom she had played as a matter of course, may suddenly have been enveloped in the painful glory of the last happiness of existence just as it was departing. At the end of her strength, perhaps with a pitiful realization of the greatness of her loss, so un-

expectedly revealed, she stopped knocking, gave up all hope, and was about to leave. Just then her lady's-maid appeared, a person who knew all that was at stake (and who was there who would not have known it?). She began to cheer Josephine and rouse her. Finally, following either her own impulse or an idea of her mistress's, to whom a last flaring hope had brought a conception of the nature of this silent man behind the door, she hurried away to bring the children. Hortense, who now had reached the age at which Josephine had been married, and Eugène, who had become to Bonaparte ever more a son, pupil, and confidant, now came and knocked at the door with their mother; they begged, implored, and finally wept like Josephine, who had been standing there through endless hours. And what all the appealing to Bonaparte's love, buried under anger and insult, had not accomplished, the sobbing and pleading of the children really attained. All the affection for Josephine that still survived, all the emotion that poured forth from this first and greatest love of his life, was clothed in a fervent compassion for Eugène and Hortense, who begged of him not to make them again orphans. During those hours when he had listened motionless to Josephine's knocking, prayers, and tears, it may have become clear to him that to this petitioner imploring entrance his love would never again afford the same incomprehensible power, at once both evil and beautiful; so he opened the door. And he saw Josephine staggering, her face wet with tears, saw the children, who had thrown themselves on their knees before him. All rancour left him. He knew: this was complete subjection. Something different began in which the past had scarcely any share. So he took the tired Josephine very kindly in his arms and found that he was really quite content and that a divorce did not belong to all the many things now waiting for him to do.

The next morning he received his brother Lucien as he lay in the nuptial bed with Josephine.

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All reports of the time following relate consistently that Bonaparte never referred by even a word to what had been forgiven on that memorable night, and that nothing was noticeable in Josephine's behaviour pertaining to what had happened, except that in company her eyes may have sought Bonaparte's much oftener than ever before. In the house in the rue de la Victoire there was again a social life. Bonaparte's hair had been burned brown by the Egyptian sun and the long sea-voyage; he now wore it short and often assumed a style of dress resembling that of a Pasha. He gave Josephine little nods to indicate people whom he wished her to engage in conversation with, or to restrain, or even to stop; as well as to let her know that he was secretly retiring into his work-room for conference. And Josephine obeyed him cleverly and happily; she captivated all their guests by her ingenuous smile (which, however, did not show her teeth, which no longer were very good) and by the perfect grace of her body, which was still very beautiful. Her days were filled with people who paid her hundreds of compliments and who related little incidents to her; they were nearly all "charming" people, if one only knew just how to take them. She did not at all foresee that, behind all this life which she graced with such amiability, something was taking place which in the end would become another historical event. Thus — the first one to be subdued on Bonaparte's present road of subjugation — she was always of good cheer and sometimes really so much in love with her husband that she would not have recognized herself, if in that memorable hour of the night in their bedroom she had not already begun very speedily to forget the past — a characteristic of the change in most women.

*BOOK FOUR*

THE GREAT POSITION







## CHAPTER ONE



# CHANGE

...World play, the masterful,  
Blends is and seems.  
Eternal foolishness  
Mixes *us* in.

*Nietzsche*

There has long been an agreement between average readers and the writers of books that records of human fortunes are to consist essentially in the creation of clear causal relationships between events and the persons affected by them: that if the persons represented are subjected to intelligible occurrences, the results are noticeable transformations; or, in other words, that the inner change corresponds to the outer. Thus a complete change in a human being is not infrequently made possible by clever manipulation of circumstance; but because of this, for many people who have become accustomed to seek a handy interpretation of life in such manipulations, the outlook on a fact of existence which could with benefit have been kept clearly in mind is often disguised. So, too, the transformation of a person is frequently given such high and un-human significance that it can be conceived only as grace or predestination. What generally is understood by such a high-sounding word (to which so many entertaining and historically clever records relate) is really not a fundamental change in an already definitely shaped human nature (as you are led to believe in such instances as Buddha or St. Francis of Assisi), but rather, if one wishes to call

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this, so to speak, substantial change a chemical one, solely a physical modification in which the inner nature continues to function almost as before.

Transition periods, wherein no close-bound arrangements foster the development of those types which we are wont to consider as life-conforming, grant numerous examples of these so-called changes, and literature is not far behind in its representations. Since in reality as well as in books the faithful woman, and she who is inclined in love completely "to be bound up in one person," are likely to be outclassed among the obtruding examples, one primitive instance (in connexion with the "change") of a woman will here be mentioned: that of a strangely pious girl of the bourgeoisie who later became a prostitute. If life (or an author) shows first such a being as a holy child in a procession and then as a half-naked, drunken, orgiastic slut, and if between the two pictures there is introduced, as a recorder's trick, an instance of blighted love, one may very well be content to accept the word "transformation." But if to the first picture is added the knowledge that in this devotion there is at work an unsteady, wavering self-abnegation and self-expression, a vague intoxication in humility and at the same time an ingratiating at the world surrounding, and that these same qualities exist allotropically in the prostitute (as ecstasy, desire for repentance, and the like), then there can be no more mention of "transformation." Without actually disappearing, some lines and colours fade in a human image, while others stand out accentuated; in the prostitute the vain bigotry is still there, and her present life-language could with a little effort be transcribed into the old text. There are, briefly (either chosen or supported by "circumstance"), certain forces of will at work, or more frequently forces of distaste for a part of one's own being, which lift out a group of inclinations and qualities from the manifold, contradictory supply of the body and make a "character" thereof; seemingly this oc-



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curs when whatever does not fit into the new picture simply ceases to be; that is, when forgetfulness has begun — not only in the subject, but in the author who records such changes.

As far as one can, in the mass of printed material concerning Josephine, speak of biographers at all, they serve, as has already been indicated, a Beauharnaisian ancestral cult or build novel-like images on pretty and solid falsifications — that is, if they do not belong to that group (hardly worth mentioning) of “ discoverers ” of facts, who have handed down such pertinent findings as discussions on the ifs and wheres of Josephine’s birthmarks. But those who in their reports of her life go so far as to concede to Josephine a previous existence which was not entirely blameless give full satisfaction for the concession in their unanimous agreement on her transformation after the reconciliation which took place after Bonaparte’s return from Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

However strange the idea may seem to ascribe a powerful transformation of the whole inner life to such a feminine creature as Josephine, there is, seen from far off, something of an explanation for it; not that the present absence of lovers can be interpreted as a change in her being, but rather that Josephine is here and now recast from a sentimental figure into one noble and sublime. In this period of her life forces began to sprout which actually bloomed fully only many years later, forces of a transformation which in truth did not take place in Josephine’s nature, but rather in the image presented to the world, in the opinions and reports about her, in the interpretations of her actions; briefly, in the figure of history which she began to be as the wife of Bonaparte — and which later she considerably outstripped in the process. In other

<sup>1</sup> The only substantial historian who does not do this is Frédéric Masson. But, much as the author is obliged to this endlessly indefatigable detective of Napoleonic history, the priceless procurer of material for this description, he must regard Masson’s thousand-page, all-embracing work on Josephine rather as a shrewd and meritorious collection of material than an actual biography, which shapes a human being.

words, while she still lived on uncurbed, in a pretty and foolish manner which made manifest enough of the old Josephine, nevertheless in the mysterious, miraculous mirrors of the people's imagination there began to appear outlines which were filled in by those wishes and hopes and expectations which make a legendary character. Thus there resulted at this time the charming Josephine now familiar to the present-day Frenchman, who connects with the once living woman only a short list of dates and facts; altogether she became a sort of idol to the qualities which Frenchwomen admire in themselves — the qualities, or rather the parcel of contradictions, which Frenchwomen have used from time immemorial to establish their power over men. If one adds to this that the fairy-tales are not burdened with any unnecessary previous history, and that Josephine's fitness for legend-creation was first of all furnished by the fabulous nature of her ascent, now beginning, it will be easy to find another element in the present enormous change in Josephine's circumstance of life which the biographic quick-change artists continually bring forward. But even this recasting she, with all her earthiness, did not make easy; for scarcely one other among all fantastically risen women has ever been so little changed by new greatness as was Josephine.

This biography deals so little with any kind of refutation of deep-rooted opinion that its final note had to be preceded by this little excursion into "transformation" — specifically Josephine's so-called change — since a summing up and a reduction to a few denominators become necessary. How? those readers who know the date of Josephine's death will ask; how is it possible to crowd almost the intrinsic third of this life into such a short space? Is not all that has been so far recorded simply a preliminary to the wonderful ascent which now begins? Is this a caprice of the biographer, or does he finally assume that the reader himself has been sufficiently instructed in the following decade and a half — the time of Jose-

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phine's greatness and tragedy, which has been so often and so voluminously described? Well, for the biographer the intrinsic reality does not begin here; rather, to him it seems to have come to an end on the night of reconciliation, which has been termed Josephine's subjugation: the end of rebellion, the end of the frivolous certainty that something new and delightful must happen, the end altogether of her own fateful adventure. That this is true the few following chapters will prove; also that the caprice of the author has nothing to do with the brevity of this conclusion, and that he does not expect of his readers any but a general knowledge of that world-shaking epoch which is called the Napoleonic. As to this epoch, it will be mentioned only in connexion with Josephine. And however little that may be, it is considerably more than her actual association with the great history of that time, an association which, closely considered, is to be found only in the fact that she stands lonely in the midst of it, like Helen in the siege of Ilium, bound only by the guilt of love. And perhaps this is one of the reasons why the masses guarded and fostered the affectionate and foolish myth about her: that Josephine, at the side of the mighty will, and surrounded always by violent ambitions and agitations, simply was there and wanted nothing but to be left where she had accidentally arrived, to be allowed to go on playing her manifold little games, which made the time hurrying westward amusing to her.



## CHAPTER TWO



# THE HOUSEHOLD

Although more than three and a half years passed between their marriage and the reconciliation, this time of separation and reunion, of wildest passion and jealousy, of Bonaparte's final agonizing renunciation and Josephine's careless continuation of her former life, which made their breach almost a complete reality, can hardly be designated as a state of matrimony. That begins rather at the time when Josephine gave up her individual freedom and silently placed herself in that section of life which alone was left to her in such a marriage. Until then there had been a household — lately even two — but it had been the household of Josephine Beauharnais, who only hesitatingly and gradually allowed herself to be called Madame Bonaparte, for she often thoroughly forgot the existence of a husband. But now he was undeniably present and spoke of the house in the rue de la Victoire as “ my house ” and hastily aired out of Malmaison the already musty little scent of the bygone idyll, just as Josephine had banished it from her own consciousness with enforced forgetfulness. And at this strange fatal moment in which Bonaparte made the final, untragic stroke under his great love and became determinedly a husband for whom there were no problems of love in marriage, Josephine began her arrangements for the new state of life foolishly enough: she assumed a subordinate role which

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she could not hope to carry off, and zealously stimulated a feeling of love for her subduer. At the moment when she understood that this sincere, kindly, strict husband bore her no grudge for her wicked former affairs, she also discovered that he had become actually and profoundly inaccessible to her. And then began the strange love of Josephine for Bonaparte; but of this and its roots and forces mention will be made later.

As Josephine, more than twenty years before — at that time, to be sure, foolish and timid — had gone through the gloomy old house of the Beauharnais in the rue Thévenot, surveying everything with which she would have to live, she now went through the house of her life. And the new feeling for her husband now took root in her just there where formerly her young ignorance had confused her gaze. Thus it turned out that, in taking possession of her new existence, she saw ahead such crooked and involved paths that all her new resolves gave way before her old experience, which had taught her simply to get along with everything as well as possible. There was, for instance, the great question of money. Bonaparte was really not stingy, and she should have known that he understood her weaknesses and even indulged them. But she was afraid of him; this was a new phenomenon, whose nonsense she of course understood, but against which she was unable to prevail. Something of the awful fear of sinking into a friendless poverty had remained in her consciousness from that memorable night and had been absorbed into her feeling for Bonaparte. There was also a fear of his anger (which, she must soon have found out, never lasted very long and with which, by a little tact, she could easily cope), which made her forget all too often, in his presence and that of his friends, her experience in the art of human treatment and led her to lose her conception of measure and distance and to fall occasionally into a panic, when simply a smile or the right word was all that was necessary.

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This being left in the lurch by her experience and skill at contact with people became most obvious (and most disastrous) before the very ones whom she had to consider from now on as her closest friends — that is, the Bonaparte clan.

Josephine knew well enough how inextricably Bonaparte was bound up in his family. (Stendhal said later on that it would have been great luck for Napoleon if he had not had them at all.) His never ending solicitude for his own people must have made it clear to Josephine, even at the time of Bonaparte's greatest love for her, that here was a taboo which she must never disturb. Granted, at that time Bonaparte had been to her merely one with whom on the morrow she might have nothing in common; thus her nature, which was never much inclined to reflections, had paid no attention to these relations and their ill will, except when the question of payment of money sent by Bonaparte came up or when she had to fear the gossip of her brothers- and sisters-in-law. Now all this was changed. Josephine had to consider the existence of Madame Letizia and of the four brothers and three sisters of her husband in such a way that there should result, as far as it lay within her power, a tolerable relationship.

So far as the mother-in-law was concerned, every effort, to be sure, would have been in vain. Josephine's past life, her age, her barrenness, her pecuniary circumstances, together with her extravagance, had erected a powerful bulwark of prejudice in Mother Letizia, with her few demands and petty thriftiness; and no matter how hard Josephine might have tried to find a way into this narrow, austere heart, she would have been destined to failure. For Madame Letizia, who at forty-five years of age was already an old woman (although in the end she outlived most of her children), saw in her rouged, dressy daughter-in-law a woman of almost her own age who had found a way into the nuptial bed of her son and had taken from the family something that belonged to it. So every

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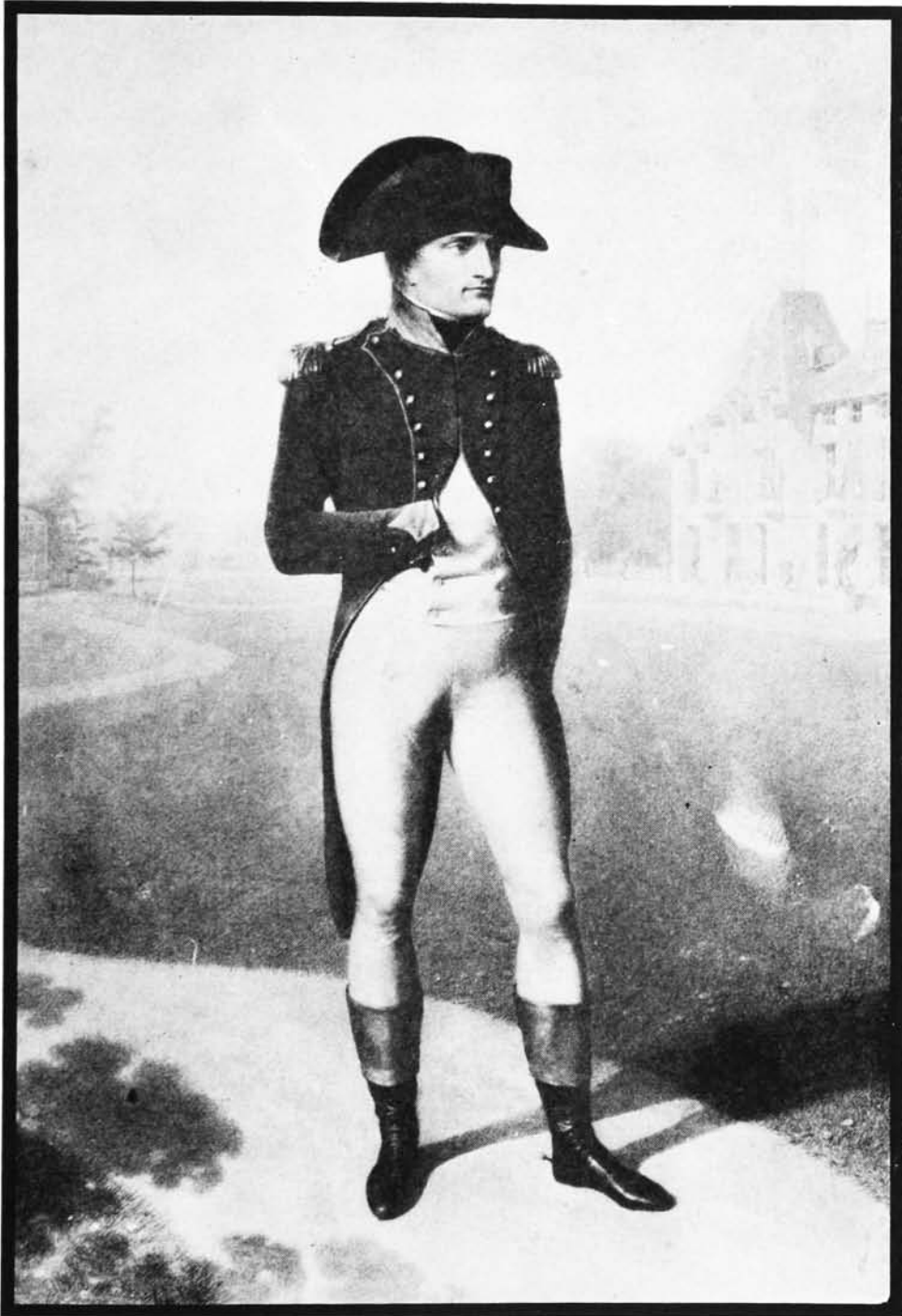
word of the "Widow Beauharnais" was suspect to her. And Josephine was completely powerless against these dry, rustic parries, because she understood only a part of the short sentences of Madame Letizia; for the old woman, even after she had long been installed in a grand palace and was reluctantly forced to hold court, still mutilated the French language by an admixture of Italian and Corsican dialect.

Few bridges as there may have been between the primitive matriarch and the representative of this "damned" civilization, in which women thirty-six years of age danced in transparent dresses and pretended to be youthful, it should have been as possible to establish a natural alliance with the other children of this mother as it had been to create a union with Napoleon because of his love. For all the other seven Bonapartes were intent upon becoming French in manners and social accomplishments; they had the snobbish weakness of a first generation for everything smart, which betrays tradition; especially with the female Bonapartes Josephine should have detected, in spite of any difference in age, a feminine identity and could, for instance, have got on with the lovely Pauline as she had in her time with the lovely and equally amorous Térésia. Small an echo of joy as the reconciliation of husband and wife must have aroused in the family, effective as the disapproval of Madame Letizia, above everything in regard to Josephine's extravagance, may have been, nevertheless all the brothers and sisters of Bonaparte would undoubtedly have tried to establish, a little more willingly at least, the appearance of goodwill had not Josephine strengthened their resentment by her varieties of covetousness. Meanwhile the event to which the chapter on the return referred had taken place — namely, the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire — and Bonaparte had become First Consul; his position of power, which before had been conceded him by fame and desire, had now been confirmed and guaranteed. And although Josephine, neither

now nor later in the greater future, ever displayed her part in such power by haughtiness or presumption, she again and again, in all the current ceremonies which required precedence, insulted the highly sensitive and vain brothers and sisters of Napoleon, and especially the wives of the brothers, by an exaggerated insistence on the rights of her position. And this exaggeration of her otherwise slight ambition, as well as her occasional exaggeration of proofs of sympathy in her attempts at approach to the brothers and sisters of her husband, finally completely destroyed any possibility of a personal relationship.

In any case, it certainly would not have been easy to get along with those seven variants of ungifted ambition and uninhibited egotism, of whom Napoleon himself said that they behaved toward him as if he had squandered their paternal inheritance to their hurt. For as each of them, at every step in Bonaparte's ascent, not only felt the right to make new claims on him, but also conceived the absurd idea that with each successful day he had done something that really belonged to them, they envied Josephine and every other proof of Napoleon's inexhaustible generosity toward his own people. But this is not the place to recount the behaviour of those seven men and women toward their brother, which finally moved him to say: "My relatives have done me much more harm than I have done them good," nor can any space be devoted to illustrations of the individual characteristics of these brothers and sisters in their loveless profiteering and perfidies. So far as Josephine is concerned, she added to the above-mentioned faults the greater one of answering intrigues with little conspiracies, gossip with the most shocking slander, and small exhibitions of hatred with uncontrolled scenes. When the too zealous defenders of Josephine seek to justify this by saving that in her love for her husband she became enraged over the increasingly crafty ingratitude of his brothers and sisters and therefore let them occasionally feel her just anger, their interpreta-





BONAPARTE AS FIRST CONSUL, IN 1800  
*Painting by Eugène Isabey, in the Château of Malmaison*



tions must be contradicted by the fact that Josephine herself was the originator of the statement (which no pamphleteer during the time of the Restoration neglected to pass on), the hideous defamation, that Napoleon had been the lover of his sister Pauline.<sup>1</sup> What a strange and absurd manifestation of conjugal love: to accuse Napoleon, with his narrow, strict, bourgeois family sense, of incest! That such an accusation should become attached to his name and not to that of Pauline Borghese, whose reputation could not have suffered from anything even worse than that, of course never entered Josephine's mind. She had only this dazzlingly beautiful young sister-in-law before her eyes, while she was herself becoming a fading, ageing woman; she saw only Bonaparte's blind affection for his favourite sister, who could have as many lovers as she wanted and who offended Josephine's sensitiveness all too often with a most crafty cruelty.

But that life in the future did not become the incessant burning hell which Josephine's occasional remarks would lead one to imagine is due to the circumstance that gradually, in the ever more fairy-like fulfilment of their ambitious dreams, the brothers and sisters remained more and more frequently away from France.

In the first years it was easiest to get along with the younger members of the clan, especially Louis and Jérôme. Of course they were soon prejudiced against Josephine by the remainder of the family. But for some time there was an especial attraction for the youngest brother, Jérôme, which tempted him to visit the house of his brother Napoleon: Hortense, who, pretty and playful in her early awakened sensuousness veiled by sensitivity, was far more attractive than Josephine had been at that age and who gave promise

<sup>1</sup> Thiers relates (from a handwritten testimonial of the times) that Josephine so far let herself go as to express this accusation to Napoleon himself, whereupon he immediately decided on a divorce. It was only the decision on the part of Eugène and Hortense to follow their mother that again made him change his mind. — Still, this report is not to be found in any of the more important source-books of the times.

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of inheriting her mother's substance and being. Only in Hortense, educated in the lively circumstance of the Revolution, the early Creole maturity of the senses received from her mother was coupled with a true Parisian self-assurance; and she inherited from her father a mental, amateurish understanding of poetry and music, which in the future clothed all her loving and love-making with fantasy.

Although Jérôme was younger than Hortense, Josephine, it is recorded, did not witness the delight of this easily inflamed youth (who was the best behaved of all the brothers and sisters) without satisfaction. Unfortunate as her early experience with Alexandre had been, she thought of marrying off Hortense as soon as possible, either because this daughter, grown-up at least in conduct, was an unpleasant testimonial to her own years, or because she simply wanted to follow the custom of the times; to this was soon added the thought that the union of Hortense and one of Napoleon's brothers would appreciably strengthen her own position in the family. At any rate, it is certain that she worked stubbornly for the realization of such a plan and eventually replaced the too youthful Jérôme by Louis Bonaparte. For Louis, Napoleon had that peculiar sort of affection which is bestowed on those for whom one has had to make sacrifices. Louis remained to him the boy who had been with him when he was a second lieutenant and whose childish hunger had often eaten up the few francs saved for the purchase of a longed-for book. Thus Napoleon had become more attached to Louis than to any other of his brothers, had made him, while still a boy, his aide-de-camp, and had taken him along to Italy and Egypt. This special attachment of Bonaparte for Louis seemed to recommend him as a son-in-law, especially since he was apparently on amicable terms with Eugène and thus promised to be a strong connecting link between the Beauharnais and the Bonapartes. Louis, who was as little enthusiastic over this marriage as was Hortense,

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turned out to be neither a good husband nor the hoped-for connecting link. But at that time all this was as little to be foreseen as his later crafty and arrogant behaviour to the brother who had called him son, or, taken all together, his entire small-brained, petty course of life.

Burdensome as all the members of the family may occasionally have been as playfellows in Josephine's present games, they were, as has been said, to her luck, less and less frequently present, and so long as the "great family plot" against her had not begun, she could, in her existence so entirely devoted to the moment, the easier forget this retinue, the more her time was filled colourfully and completely. After those exciting days of Brumaire, in whose conspiratorial activity she had herself even, unsuspectingly, played a small role, and when to her great surprise General Bonaparte had come home the First Consul, the whole of life had been raised to a stratum in which it was a pleasure for Josephine to exist. Suddenly everything she had sought so zealously — indeed, often so zealously as to humiliate herself — society, banquets, receptions, all the elegantly disguised defences against loneliness, now became her actual cycle of duties. And although she frequently spoke with a little sigh of the burden of these duties, this being in company with many people, with people of almost every sort, was nevertheless an inexhaustible pleasure to her, and when later she occasionally spoke of seeking solitude, she meant merely a diminution in the number of people surrounding her, yet only to the extent that those remaining would still constitute a considerable crowd. As Josephine was in the first place not especially particular, the rigid duties of this society were brought to her consciousness only when she detected in herself a liking for an evilly slandered woman and when Bonaparte forbade her any such intercourse, since he now cared increasingly for feminine respectability. Thus the elegantly arranged society in

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which Josephine moved was very different from that of the days in which the now forbidden Térézia had been her companion, and Barras the centre of a world which had thought itself great — Barras, whom nobody mentioned any more and who, weakly fuming, had gone into a still pleasant exile, to prepare the miserably rancorous vengeance of his memoirs.

On the whole, this richly populated household was of a kind which benefited Josephine. And although, at the time, she was designated as the favourite of a great Pasha, it is to be said in the first place that there were no other wives, and that the favourite was not displeased with a little hint here or a reproof there — with all the regulations and dispositions of the Pasha — for it was pleasant to be guided by one who knew what he wanted, and she had quickly tested the elasticity of the rules and the flexibility of the directions. And however, insensibly, she may have feared the occasional wrath of her master, she knew she was safe in her place so long as she did not transgress any of the unspoken, abiding, basic rules for the favourite. But she had lost all desire for that in her great fear of loneliness, especially since she had begun to outbid herself in her love for Napoleon. Besides, she now lived a full and tiring life — and finally there was one other reason: her body was not in the same condition as before. Those many little flames no longer throbbed in it; the joy she had felt in men's glances, the excitement of the touch of her skin beneath the thin covering — these were absent, or, rather, not absent, but somewhere else, not in the body itself, whose beautiful curves, as she grew heavier, had begun to increase. Something happened within her, in the secret physical household. What it was Josephine did not know or even wish to think about. She would take the baths again, she thought occasionally — it couldn't yet be *that!* But she became deeply worried over it and then senselessly and wearily happy, and, worst of all, whims began to appear, sad and violent; then suddenly again

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a restlessness took hold of her in which everything she had or saw annoyed her painfully. Then she had to have new people, new games, and, before all else, new *things*, many, many things, all of which, only at the first moment of their arrival, roused a tiny, pungent lust from the confused bog of greed, a lust which ever demanded more and more.



### CHAPTER THREE



## GETTING AND SPENDING

Soon after the *coup d'état* Talleyrand informed Bonaparte that Josephine was in considerable debt to numerous Parisian merchants, and that the ever increasing grumblings of the creditors had already been heard in public. Bonaparte was prepared for these debts and had determined to pay for them out of a reserve fund. In order to spare himself in those busy days the unavoidably tearful scene, he sent his secretary Bourrienne to Josephine to learn the total amount of the sums due. Josephine immediately said she feared Bonaparte too much to confess the actual figure: never could she name it, that would be impossible. Bourrienne would be kind if he would estimate them simply at what she would admit. "I think I owe something like a million two hundred thousand francs, but I want to admit only six hundred thousand. I shall contract no more debts and shall pay the remainder by degrees from my savings." Bourrienne replied that Bonaparte did not estimate her debts even at six hundred thousand, so that his anger would doubtless be no greater if she confessed the whole sum. This she would never be able to do, she answered, she knew Bonaparte. Thus it turned out that really only half the debts were paid, and probably just those which Josephine happened to remember first and those for which she thought herself most responsible. Among the bills was one for thirty-eight hats, all delivered in a single month, which Josephine



could hardly recollect; this was an item in the report of Bourrienne, the first of its kind, which was followed by numerous others, noted by various recorders. They all contain enormous figures for expenses, which for the most part she was unable to recall; they speak of her fear of confessing all these debts, of her resolve to incur none further and to settle the balance out of her savings. Thus things continued through the years, but the debts grew in strange proportion to the increasingly large annual allowance which she received; the tempo of her spending beat faster as her memory became poorer; thus she not only forgot that in her whole life she had never saved two sous, although talking continually about saving, but from one day to the next she forgot what sums she spent, as well as the items purchased; so it is not strange that the merchants took advantage of this poor memory. To say that Josephine later spent in six years at least twenty-five million francs — and real francs, at that, with the old high purchasing value — is to give some idea of how tremendously important the mere spending of money in itself became in her life. In a letter of a French author there is the statement that inactivity is doubly dangerous to a person bent on making money, for in such a period not only does he earn nothing, but he is also apt to spend more. And finally in the spending he takes up time which is thus lost to further activity. Applied to Josephine (of course it is absurd to connect her with any kind of money-earning), the reverse takes place: namely, her time was taken up with spending for its own sake, with excuses for it, with the flighty play she made over all her expensive acquisitions, and, finally, with worry over the accrued debts. Much more must be set down about this effort at filling in time, for in its enactment there is to be seen much that is characteristically Josephine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Figures and facts in the details following are taken from Masson, who has, in the third volume of his work on Josephine (*Josephine, Impératrice et Reine*), compiled a statistical list of all “the playthings of the Empress,” comprising hundreds of pages.

Her human surroundings with their breathable atmosphere, to be sure, accommodated the boundless growth of these inclinations in Josephine. Bonaparte, after the reconciliation, understood very well what a strong weapon Josephine's guilty conscience furnished him, and that it became the mightier the less he used it to threaten her. Thus, for all his strict demands upon a respectable conduct of life which would conform with the new position, he was ever indulgent; so much more so because this position with its power and honour was new even to him, and in working ceaselessly on its enlargement he kept it ever new. In this knowledge of her husband's forbearance, which was mixed with fear, Josephine was quickly tempted to the realization that now she must entertain on a grand scale. And little as she understood, in those years of the consulship, the extent of what she had to represent, she let herself be enticed to extravagance by the atmosphere which surrounded Bonaparte, the atmosphere of the gambler who daily brings (or can bring) home greater winnings. And Josephine was driven to this by conditions within herself: the marriage which demanded always so much control and reserve, and the renunciation of long-practised habits; her never satisfied desire to play *the* role in society; and, finally, the fact that she did not know how to be alone, and that all her interests were devoted to people and things only in so far as they could enhance her person or be of value socially. The role of the mother, which had never absorbed her much, and especially after Hortense and later Eugène had married and were absent most of the time, did not serve as a valve for her sentimentality; the "great love" for Napoleon (who in ten years was in Paris a little over nine hundred days) had meaning only during periods of painful transformation. Both these factors contributed to strengthening Josephine in her objectless craze. This flaccidity of her inner life was accompanied by a tension of the outer forms (as far as they could be noticed in society), a tension qualified by a Latin-Gallic inheritance, social

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ambition, and, finally, the power of great circumstance — but this only hastened the inner process, until all her ability for concentration was gradually frayed out and consumed. Thus we hear of Josephine's "soulful loveliness" and similar legendary qualities (always there is emphasis on her present piety). All this was attributed to her by her aristocratic friends and the émigrés — especially the émigrés, many of whom were indebted to her for permission to return, consciously contributed to the Josephine legend, partly from enthusiasm at finding a "woman of her type" at the side of this Bonaparte, and partly because of their wish to be obliged to forgive themselves less for having allowed her to help them. More must be said of the lauded piety, in this sketch of Josephine's present state of life. In none of her utterances, nor any of the reports about her — in spite of her nearness to death in the prison — is there one note of the true depth of life, anything of the silence of prayer or of pious exaltation. The religious strain often found in the worldly people around her, who were also superficial, and particularly in some of the best royalists, was entirely lacking in her: that is the occasional *Dies iræ* attitude, the practised conciliation of the Rohans and others, who near Easter time put on the dress of the Third Order in which they would be buried, and, forgetting the world, prepared themselves for the sacrament. To Josephine, Catholicism meant simply a dress of rank, and one of the ingredients of what she understood as fashionable life, the childishly foolish royalism which she was wont to affect as the wife of the greatest gainer of a revolution. Pleasant as the clever, political Concordat of Napoleon was to her at that time, and little as the imprisonment of the Pope later on by Napoleon disturbed either her mind or her heart, in her smart, sad utterances concerning the event she undoubtedly found consolation in the thought that such an incident was really politics, man's affair, which woman knows nothing about.

Josephine, at the side of a man who was almost always away and who besides was taken up with things which were entirely unfamiliar to her, soon began to stop up the chinks and cracks in her life through which the great desolation could penetrate. At first her activities appeared highly dutiful and praiseworthy, and the slightly boisterous good taste which she brought to their accomplishment aroused so much admiration that even Bonaparte, who, inexperienced in elegance, first had to learn what beautiful things cost, forgot the great expense. The first and most lasting of Josephine's costly tastes was furniture. What little experience in living she had brought along from the *dégagé* renovated sugar-factory which had been the domicile of her youth in Trois-Ilets had ever since been refined by practice and observation. Bonaparte, to be sure, had somewhat bungled that costly accessory the house in the rue de la Victoire. But fate intended for her enough houses in which she could abundantly and imposingly accomplish her "furnishing." When she took possession of Malmaison, whose preparation would fill an amusing book on culture- and art-history, she mastered the knack of finding people who could give form to her own indefinite ideas, and this she later used to good advantage in making habitable the official abode of the First Consul. This new official domicile consisted of spacious, scantily furnished rooms in the Luxembourg Palace, which about seven years before had served as Alexandre Beauharnais's first prison.

As a result of this practice, it can be said that from Josephine's very first reception in the Luxembourg it became a social axiom that she was a woman of taste; to be sure, the people of the old régime whom she began to attract to her home agreed but little with "daring" innovations — the magnificent tea-table for twenty persons, or the pillar of gilded wood on a marble base which supported costly, exotic flowers. But the delight in the reception-rooms, expressed quite too loudly, after the manner of the motley company,

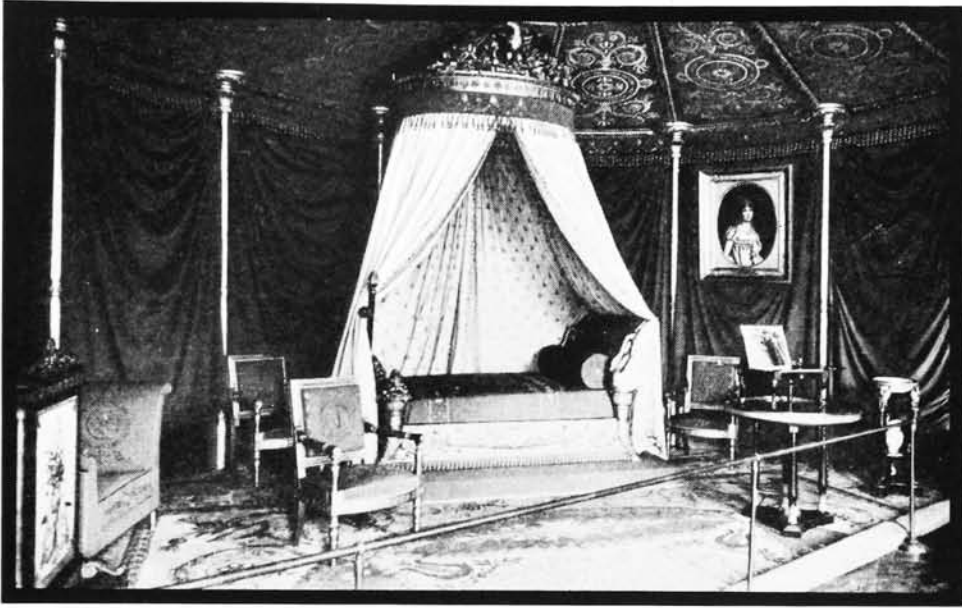
caused Bonaparte to entrust Josephine ever more and more with a kind of private ministry in taste and beauty. Not that he himself was uninterested in or unreceptive to æsthetic matters; he was simply unschooled and possessed of the haughty insecurity of a man without tradition who is forced to produce everything for himself. Thus in the beginning he looked on matters of taste as a work-ridden man looks on young plutocrats; something after the manner of the Jews and Americans of the nineteenth century, who allowed their wives free rein in the affairs of spirit, art, and beauty. That a new taste was beginning to develop, Bonaparte sensed without at first suspecting how much he would himself contribute to it, both then and later. Already, in this quickly passing time, the ceremonies of the Convention, invented by David, appeared barbarously wild; already the festivities of the Directory had sunk into the miserable, ridiculous, and all too boisterous taste of yesterday — those festivities at one of which “the Directors and legislators repaired between Greek and Roman deities to the Champ de Mars, and the sun wagon of Phœbus, surrounded by the Hours and Seasons, stuck in the mud before it arrived at the wooden zodiac.”<sup>1</sup> After the turn of the century the transformations of the Revolution gave way to a new style of living; with wonderful rapidity there grew to maturity, from the short, barbarous antiquity of the height of the Revolution and the antique baroque of the period of the Directory, the fine classic style which took its name from the quickly formed creation of Bonaparte. And although Josephine did not have quite the share in this growth which is here and there ascribed to her, she did, with the fine sensibility of a naturally smart woman, observant of the changes of fashion, give considerable expression to the style-formation of her world, since she soon became not only the richest and most extravagant woman of her time, but also the wife

<sup>1</sup> Jakob Burckhardt: *Die Allegorien des Directoire* (*The Allegories of the Directory*).

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of the great man under whose dictatorship the soul formed its desire for art.

In the idle days when Josephine used to saunter with Charles around the grounds of Malmaison (where at that time not even tips could be paid), she had raved about the changes which the house and park needed so much. Now that Napoleon had the price, its necessary adaptation to his needs was the welcomed first excuse for beginning the renovation of this estate, which had been intended for a modest, middle-class life, but which should now, with all consideration for her husband, become *her* house — indeed, become it so thoroughly that the thought of Josephine would always be connected with Malmaison. Josephine, who later became more or less the mistress of the Tuileries, Versailles, Saint-Cloud, Fontainebleau, and all the other wonderful palaces, finally left in Malmaison, for all its continual changes, something of her being. The first “adaptations” consisted in such a fundamental change of the entire inner design of the house that, because of all the breaking up and joining of rooms and the like, the old walls lost almost all resistance and, indeed, would have fallen had not props on the outside supported them. Sixteen guest-rooms were added at the beginning; stables and coach-houses were installed; and the whole place was decorated by the fashionable architect Fontaine, with as many vases and statues, friezes and paintings as he could find space for. Next in order was the beautiful park, which for the following fourteen years was compelled to feel something of the restlessness and changeability of its mistress. Everything must be definitely English there, “properly winding, lively, variously formed, with chasms, brooks, and temples.” Until the first short interruption of the work more than six hundred thousand francs — thus more than double the purchase-price — had been spent on the transformation, for whose supposedly final execution a similar sum would be required. And only then began the never ending trifles, the commissions to paint-



BEDROOM IN THE CHÂTEAU OF MALMAISON



ENTRANCE TO THE CHÂTEAU OF MALMAISON





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ers, sculptors, wood-carvers, and art-dealers, the sacking of the state depositories for *objets d'art* (fortunately without cost), which were delivered — statues, stelæ, and vases — until Bonaparte, finally satisfied, declared Malmaison complete. Had he divined, while praising the beautiful house, what the trifles still to be added, which Josephine spoke to him about, would mean, he probably would have forbidden any further work to be undertaken on the estate. For first Josephine declared that playgrounds of all kinds were necessary; then a portable theatre and other costly addenda for the amusement of the guests. The fact that Bonaparte gradually lost his taste for the ever changing estate and had the château of Saint-Cloud adapted for his own use gave Josephine the feeling that Malmaison was entirely her house — and hence she acted accordingly. The expenses which followed for the “improvements” amounted to two hundred and sixty thousand francs, and that was merely a beginning. For Josephine had taken on her own staff — architects, landscape-gardeners, and the like — and had also resolved to enlarge the estate so that it should extend to Saint-Cloud. To this end, woods, fields, and useless land were bought, bought, bought — here planted, there cleared; the courses of brooks were changed; a small sea was laid out, which continually disappeared into the ground; romantic little bridges and rock groups were built; here a temple was erected, there pillars. And the end was not in sight. Thus not only the number of servants grew, but to the highly paid staff of the renovators of Malmaison other employees with handsome salaries were added, such as the superfluous librarian, the priest, and others. There were all together about twenty servants, the number being increased every time Josephine conceived a notion for some new fancy. For example, when she began to form a menagerie from the animals given to her and those she bought in abundance, she engaged keepers, who remained until the accommodations for the majority of the beasts proved to be unsuitable

and she, suddenly losing her interest in them, presented the "difficult" wards to the Jardin des Plantes. But even then there were still plenty of animals left which needed less care, mammals as well as birds of all sorts, living in the park; stags and swans and peculiar varieties of ducks now belonged among the ornaments of Malmaison, which had become, so unwillingly, fond of finery.

Among the occupations which Josephine followed at that time with a real obsession, there is one which, living on in the names of several beautiful flowers, has become woven into the legend of her life-history: horticulture. Her knowledge of the names and properties of plants originated in her native land, where, roaming through the tropical forests, she adorned herself with flowers; it was added to by her meagre instruction in botany in the convent, but received its best schooling from the magic and symbolic beliefs of the Negro women in plants. And she had continued to love flowers, to surround herself with them; and even in the revolutionary days, so rich in privations, she had considered bunches of flowers in her vases as necessities of life. Meanwhile she familiarized herself with the flora of France as she had with that of the distant isle. But from the intensity of her youthful experience there returned a scent and a glow in her at times, as if those distant blossoms had been the *real* flowers. And now that she had so much beautiful ground, such hothouses and orangeries, and the means to build many more of them, her interest in flowers turned completely to the tropical — and as long as this lasted, it engrossed Josephine more completely and happily than all her other fancies and pastimes. The incentive to create her botanical garden came from a plant-lover of her acquaintance. As she spared no expense in the undertaking, its repute, as did everything connected with the name Bonaparte, spread rapidly; and from all sides and from ever more distant lands plants came as gifts, and newly discovered species acquired names flattering to her. Thus Josephine became a sort of

patron saint of flowers, and she remained so in the memory of men, even after her passion for gardening turned again to the old petty love of flowering growth, enriched, to be sure, with many names and some knowledge. Associated with her memory is that "humanly pale" rose, which is called *Souvenir de la Malmaison*. And one of the most charming witnesses of her fancies is that magnificent *Jardin de la Malmaison* which immortalizes in excellent engravings the wonders of her garden. The one hundred and thirty thousand francs which this work cost her was the last of her large expenditures on her love of horticulture, which then came to an end. But of all the millions poured into Malmaison, those spent on the gardens gave the display-loving Josephine the greatest satisfaction: the joy of having supplied France with a new adornment. For from Malmaison the "eucalyptus, hibiscus, phlox, camellia, numerous varieties of heather, myrtle, geranium, mimosa, cactus and rhododendron, certain kinds of dahlia, not to mention rare tulips and full hyacinths" appeared in the gardens of France, and "one hundred and eighty new species bloomed in France for the first time at Malmaison."

While after her great passion for gardens and hothouses flickered out, the fancy for everything blooming still remained in Josephine — and she at times, even when there were no guests, surveyed her flowers — the shortlived blaze of her passion for other purchases left no remembrance within her. After the transportation to France of the enormous booty of Italian works of art a real or fashionable interest for ancient art began to stir in society, and Josephine immediately decided to turn that portion of the booty which was taken to Malmaison into a "collection." Thus, by her commission, works of art were bought at random by names; it is interesting to compare the purchase-prices, to see the comparatively small amounts beside the really great names, while considerable sums are noted beside the works of second- and third-rate men. To almost one hun-

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dred and thirty pictures carried away from Italy (among which are mentioned works by Giovanni Bellini, Correggio, Palma Vecchio, three by Perugino, four by Raphael, four by Titian), Josephine added a practically equal number of Flemish, Dutch, and older French paintings. How many of these by Cuyp, Metsu, Ostade, Potter, Rembrandt, Rubens, Seghers, Van Dyke, Ruysdael, Claude Lorrain, Poussin, Murillo, and so on were bought, or how many were received as gifts or carried off in the later sacking of German museums and churches, is an affair for the historians of art. Here it is to be emphasized concerning this collection, as well as the one of antique art which originated in the same manner, that it became for Josephine simply a quickly forgotten component part of Malmaison; she thought of it only when gifts increased her stock, when guests came who had reputations as art-lovers, or when some new piece was offered her for sale. When there was no adviser at hand, she bought on faith any worthless object or copy, taking them for what they were claimed to be — many times, indeed, without even seeing the articles — simply because she cared more and more for mere buying and finally could not resist the most absurd offers. As a single example it may here be mentioned that one day, God knows for what reason, she suddenly discovered a fancy for mineralogy. Then a most zealous search was made for the most beautiful possible collection of minerals. When this, composed of many thousands of pieces, was found, it was bought from its owner for a high life-annuity; the numerous boxes were called for only on the urgent demand of the seller — and they never were opened. The reason for all this buying was still her fleeting fancy, but for the sums expended many valuable things were acquired. And although Josephine may have taken less and less pleasure in the things she already possessed, all the new expenses were vehemently justified to her husband, even the enormous sums which were spent for jewels of any kind whatsoever. To be sure, Josephine possessed

a treasure worth several millions, which contained desirable pieces of jewellery of every style and material.<sup>1</sup> But whatever the price she paid for her new purchases, she got something for it; gold, stones, workmanship, objects which preserved a little that was valuable from the whim of the moment, abstruse and foolish as they may occasionally have been. And Bonaparte's rages at the sums to be paid were always quieted by Josephine's tears, her childish disconcertment, when he was shown something of value and substance. He certainly had nothing of the blind economical instinct of his mother, nothing of the avarice of his uncle Fesch; but he had been destitute, and still retained that Latin appreciation of property which caused him to regard every imposition as shameful. That he himself was imposed upon more blindly than most of the powerful men of the world, and that he, in the increasing delusion of grandeur which destroyed that *æquitas mentis*, paid the most enormous price for things which cannot be bought, are to be mentioned here only incidentally.

<sup>1</sup> Masson writes, concerning Josephine's jewels: "She possesses, according to an evaluation which is a third below the purchase-price, 4,354,255 francs' worth of valuable jewels, pearls, diamonds, and precious stones; but who can say how much has been paid for the thousands of objects in her keeping which she has worn perhaps once or not at all; the hundreds of rings, bracelets, girdle-buckles, necklaces of polished materials, and all kinds of beads, strings of agate, silver and gold, engraved stones, turquoise, malachite, scarabs, cut corals, corals with pearls . . . a number of them are merely curiosities, dearly bought objects which have little or no sales-value. And then Josephine is always having the settings changed or modernized; she trades, buys, sells, exchanges, and takes for one stone ten others. . . . Among all these jewels, some of which must have reminded her of so many things, of events, of fame, of treasured and loved beings, of the constant ascent of her star — of these ornaments, which were the ransoms of cities, of princes, of republics, gifts from popes and kings, New Years presents, pledges of love, successive tokens which she should have kept, of all these things not one is left in the way she received it. She defaces them, changes them, makes a girdle from a necklace, from ear-rings pendants, she sends gold and silver to be melted down, orders stones according to her whims, and preserves in none of the jewels the memory connected with them. Where is the little filigree medallion, the erstwhile present of the Vendémiaire General to the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais? What has she done with this rarest and most valuable of all her ornaments? Oh, it is not worth anything, it does not sparkle: she has given it away with a handful of other things for a fashionable stone.

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Napoleon, the source of the ceaselessly flowing gold stream which in Josephine's hands disappeared without a trace, finally lost all pleasure and patience in his generosity, because from year to year the disproportion grew between Josephine's expenditures and the goods purchased by them. How this desire for buying finally turned into a maniacal force, how the whim of an hour dissolved into the glimmer of a moment, which can hardly be called wishing, how a childish, uncontrollable snatching at all the glittering things in the world finally filled Josephine with a dull, harassing avarice, can be proved by a few instances arbitrarily taken from an immense store. The proper summing up, for which this chapter is the preparation, will soon have its own place.

The reports delight to recount all the objects which were brought to Josephine by all sorts of merchants and craftsmen, also by trifling amateurs, inventors of mechanical playthings, and makers of various complicated absurdities, and which she bought without even inquiring their price. The overcrowded antechamber to which Josephine used to repair after her toilet must have looked like those of the days of the fairy-tale caliphs when merchants were admitted; indeed, it was even more motley, for while the renown of Josephine's generous buying attracted the enterprising tradespeople to offer her valuables, something which had gradually become intermingled with that renown brought not only unscrupulous merchants who underbid the legitimate ones, but also the half-fools who somewhere in small towns had made playthings of great chimeras, to offer their often unique wares for sale. When Josephine acquired "an artificial orange tree, a monkey who played the violin, or a bush with singing birds" and a hundred other things for a great deal of money (sometimes the prices paid were still more excessive than those asked originally, for the accounts were often settled long after the things themselves had disappeared), she simply held what she had bought for a few minutes in her hands

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with the rosy, pointed fingers or showed them to the first person she met. And if she did not put the expensive toys into a drawer and forget about them, she gave them to children, and not only to the rich, spoiled children of her acquaintances; it is said that often some poor petitioner who came with her child carried away a costly foolish plaything instead of the gift of charity she had hoped for. After the many hundred thousands which Napoleon yearly added to Josephine's annual allowance, the following command was issued in an attempt to put an end at least to the exploitation of the house: all the people surrounding Josephine were forbidden to allow any furniture, pictures, jewels, or other objects from merchants or private persons to be admitted into her rooms; and all tradespeople, as well as things arriving through any channel whatsoever, were to be referred to the intendant.

But before a last mention can be made of the easily foreseen result of this and similar attempts, the new, ostentatious frame must be placed around Josephine's picture, the frame to which belong the streams of gold, the antechamber filled with people, the intendant, and much, much more.



## CHAPTER FOUR



# UNEASY GREATNESS AND APOTHEOSIS

Little as Josephine, until now, may have shared in Bonaparte's plans and actions, she did, nevertheless, feast luxuriously on the results of his successes, and sun herself in the warm glow of his fame, hoping ever with all her heart that the ascent might so continue. Had anyone on the day of her entry into the Tuileries prophesied that she herself would soon desire a check to this ascent, she would doubtless have laughed at the prophet. To be sure, just how much further this rise would extend she could not imagine, unless Bonaparte's annual salary of half a million would be increased still more or he would some day "come to his senses" and finally recall the Bourbons. She had taken the name Monk, so often mentioned in her circle, into her cultural treasure-chest and imagined as the most desirable future the existence of a real court in which she, as the wife of the re-establisher of the dynasty, would take a delightful part. That she would not only long for a stop in Bonaparte's ascent, but, even with all her royalism, tremble, for a time, for the continuance of the Republic, she could not, of course, foresee on "that day of the first review at the Tuileries, when, as the Citizeness Bonaparte, on whom no ranks had as yet been conferred, she sat down as a simple spectator among a group of women



who wore the Grecian style of head-dress" — although that was the day which Napoleon ended with the words: "Bourrienne, to be in the Tuileries is not all; it is important to stay here."

In order to understand this metamorphosis of Josephine's desires, and the emergence of such an unexpected political wish, the events of the time of the consulship must be touched on briefly, to furnish pictures of the various roads on which this "good couple" entered into greatness.

Any thought of remaining in the Tuileries seemed at that time fantastic enough. Bonaparte would, as had the other Consuls, Cambacérès and Lebrun, at the expiration of his term of office, have to return to the rue de la Victoire or into camp, from whence all grandeur had gone. That sooner than could be foreseen he would return to that "workshop of his fate" depended greatly on the presumption of the phrase. The second, forty-day Italian campaign, beginning with the crossing of the Alps and ending with the great but dearly won battle of Marengo, was of greater moment to him than any of his previous engagements. Not only the completely spontaneous jubilation of the masses at his hasty return, but, above all, the now obvious hatred of his enemies, who had counted on either his defeat or his death, proved to Bonaparte that he had returned to a different situation. Now he was free to believe that he had France behind him and to consider his enemies as depraved sons of the country, whom it would be his duty to destroy; and to use that strongest trick of all dictatorships, wherewith the dictator declares his concern to be the concern of the nation. It must be emphasized that, after all, with the concentration of power now beginning, he did not destroy Liberty in France, for there was none. And of Equality, that other child of the already senile Republic, he thought that each man, in a wild rush to become first, would easily renounce it. So he turned this treasure of the Revolution into an empty catchword, by creating, with the order of chivalry,

the Legion of Honour, a new privileged caste, whose head he was.<sup>1</sup>

The two conclusions of peace — one with the continental powers and one with England — gave France still more confidence in him, and although these were, like all his treaties, mere armistices, he knew how to create, during the short quiet of the years of the consulship, the foundation for the powerful reorganization of the legislative and administrative departments of France and to effect that wonderful recovery of finance which made the country begin to believe in the advent of a golden age. This improvement was so absolute that the Englishmen who came over during this short period of peace (among them Pitt, who was certainly not unprejudiced) had to admit the strength of a project they had expected to find ruined or at least marasmic. It was at this time that Napoleon, by the servility of his political surroundings, allowed himself to be strengthened in the belief that, with all his good intentions for the country of his choice, its happiness was identical with his highest power, forgetting thus his revolutionary origin.

The first reward for Marengo had been a ten-year extension of his consulship. But temporary power meant nothing to him. Then there came, from the obliging governmental bodies, as honour and gratitude, his adjudication as Consul for the duration of his life.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Nodier gives the following description of Napoleon during the last year of his consulship: "A young Mameluke, whom he had brought from Egypt, opened the procession; he was dressed with Oriental splendour, a long Damascene blade at his side. In his hand he carried a bow; there was something extraordinarily romantic in this first sight. Four aides-de-camp followed, covered with gold embroidery. Behind them came a man modestly dressed in grey, his head bent, inconspicuous and unassuming: this was Bonaparte. None of his pictures resemble him. It was impossible to portray the character of this face; there was something crushing about it. . . . It was, to begin with, very long, with a stony grey complexion, eyes very deep set and very large, fixed and brilliant like a crystal. He looked sad and dejected, he sighed from time to time. He rode a white horse, one of those sent by the King of Spain." Then follows a description of the costly, gold-worked harness, which Nodier emphasizes in contrast to the usual simplicity of the First Consul, whose habit, he finally says, was simpler than that of the groom of Garat, a favourite singer of the times.

This guaranteed his stay in the Tuileries, gave him time to look around and prepare himself for whatever might happen. The next step away from the Revolution, which had never really succeeded in dechristianizing France, was the Concordat. The triumphant joy at the return of the bells meant for Bonaparte more than gratitude for a gift to his country, he thought he had actually severed the tie between royalism and Catholicism in France. During the Marengo campaign, after entering Milan, he had been present at the *Te Deum* there; now he rode for the first time, with the overjoyed Josephine, in great state to the *Te Deum* in Notre Dame, which the papal legate celebrated with the highest solemnity. When later he asked General Dalmas, who had accompanied him, what he had thought of the ceremony, he received this reply: "It was a beautiful *capucinade*; it lacked only the million men who sacrificed themselves for the destruction of what you now resurrect."

But if the number of Bonaparte's enemies decreased, the hatred of those remaining became much more violent, active, and ingenious. Already in the days of Marengo, Fouché could not officially overlook the number of conspiracies. Even the fact that Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte, each for himself, hoped for an overthrow or the death of their brother did not escape him; and now, at the order of the First Consul, he watched the Bonaparte family officially, as earlier he had done for himself; only this time without Josephine's assistance. Shortly thereafter Lucien exposed himself by the well-known brochure and incurred the displeasure of Napoleon, so that he was sent abroad as ambassador; this is mentioned to show that one of the "dangerous brothers" was removed from the family stage, which now began to show definite activity.

The conspiracies against the life of the First Consul, attempts at assassination or at least plans therefor, increased — and Bonaparte was bitterly disappointed in his hope to win to his side, through the Concordat, a part of the militant royalists. Then he determined to

annihilate what he could not reconcile. What hardness and cruelty he practised, how treason was punished and promises broken, cannot be told here. All these occurrences are recorded only because, in all the ruthlessness, Josephine's hopeful royalist illusions dwindled to nothing, and because something was added to these occurrences which, until its conversion by other, greater circumstances, instilled in her the already mentioned sudden love of the Republic. And it was this something which unexpectedly impelled Josephine to hope for a halt in the ascent of her husband.

Hardly had Bonaparte, by the life appointment as Consul, been assured of unending power for himself when, bearing in mind the manifold risks of his life, he began, like a real ruler, to think of the continuation of that power after his death. Doubtless Joseph's and Lucien's furtive efforts during the last campaigns awakened in Bonaparte the wish to safeguard his accomplishments against such succession. Now for the first time he was painfully conscious of his own childlessness and regretful over his reconciliation with the sterile Josephine. As this problem arose, which at first she did not take too tragically, Josephine pointed her domestic policies, with the previously mentioned aim in view, toward the marriage of her daughter to Louis, Napoleon's second youngest brother. By this she promised herself not only that her own position in regard to the Bonaparte family would be strengthened, but especially that Napoleon would ignore his elder brothers and designate Louis, or rather Louis's presupposed son, as his heir. If this took place, any accusations against her because she had not presented Bonaparte with a child would be insignificant, and, besides this, her influence over Hortense would guarantee her an increase in power.

At the time of Josephine's efforts to arrange this marriage a great deal of evil gossip grew up about her evident desire to have a son of Hortense take the place of one of her own. It is told again and again how she, understanding Napoleon's affection for his step-

daughter, acted as the go-between in an intrigue, knowing certainly that he would force his brother Louis to legitimize any offspring. Indeed, the rumour had spread so far that when, after many scenes, the marriage of Hortense and Louis was finally arranged, Josephine gave a wedding-ball at which Hortense wore a dress especially designed to show her girlish, unspoiled figure. It is not unlikely that Louis himself had heard these accusations, and that they dwelt in his incompetent intelligence to the extent that they spoiled his already slight joy in the marriage. But the accomplishment of this marriage, with its consequent triumph over Joseph and Lucien, did not bring Josephine the peace she had expected. Ever more unmistakably did Napoleon's road lead to an alarming goal. And even if the royalist persecutions had not convinced her that this could not be the goal of Monk — the re-establishment of the king — the letter Louis XVIII sent to her husband, and his reply of refusal, should have apprised her that any hope of her being the wife of the constable of the Bourbons was at an end. To be sure, she never could have rejoiced for very long even in a fulfilment of that hope; for beside Napoleon's ominous words that the returned Bourbons would have erected a column for him in token of gratitude and soon thereafter would have enclosed his remains in its base, there exists the statement of Louis XVIII that he would not have tolerated Bonaparte for very long at his side in the role of a second Duc de Guise.

Amusing as some of the evidences of this ambition were in the beginning to Josephine, as, for instance, the creation of some sort of princely household, it was bitter indeed for her when every day her home became more like a court, and the whispers about the ambition could no longer be ignored. If the incredible and incomprehensible should become the real, and this Bonaparte for whom, as she so long believed, she had obtained the command of the Italian army should actually become king of France, then the same

demands would be in force for him as for a real king. That meant for Josephine that the problem of her sterility and of the succession in general would again be brought under discussion in a new and most dangerous manner. A king had to have an heir to his throne: she remembered, from years before, all the importance which had been connected with the childbed of Marie-Antoinette. Now her soul was tortured by the knowledge that through her own fault her marriage had been contracted in a way which permitted its easy dissolution, and that she herself had not insisted on the religious ceremony, which, she knew, the blindly enamoured Bonaparte at that time would not have refused her. If he separated from her now, he not only had no scandal to fear, but moreover could be sure of general approval of a divorce from a barren wife. What would happen to her then?

Granted, what Miot and other writers assert, that Josephine loved the position and not the man, her fear of banishment from the rich, colourful, beautiful life would have been bitter enough. But if one adds to this fear the peculiarly apprehensive feeling of the woman who was deserted by love (although she would not admit it), one can imagine that this time, when Josephine daily said prayers for the continuance of the Republic, was a veritable hell for her. But little as the author is in sympathy with those misogynists who dispose of every sorrow of a woman with "It probably wasn't so bad," he himself must, in view of Josephine's endless gaieties during these months, repeat: it probably wasn't so bad. For while one must, concerning other women, regard the pleasures of the most difficult periods of their lives as mere surface functions, knowing that good breeding and self-discipline reserve all suffering for solitude, in Josephine's now persecuted existence there is to be found not the slightest hint of solitude; even, indeed, of a private life. Her days were filled by the crowds of people around her, and on any wakeful night (usually she slept soundly)

she occupied herself by talking to Bonaparte, who still shared the marriage bed with her. There is no doubt that this sharing of the bed (which Napoleon, however, soon put an end to) still gave her a little power over the man who was in love with his habits, and that she gained therein his consent to a number of demands which in daylight he never would have given.

To these worries, which she endlessly discussed and lamented and which she occasionally shared with whatever person was near at hand, there came suddenly, in the May days of the year 1804, a great comforting light. The men who had accommodatingly placed the remnants of the Revolution in Bonaparte's hands did, as he wished, much more: they rewarded his salvation of the Republic by completely annihilating the Republic, giving it a new name for his sake. Then there came, on that 18th of May, all the grave-diggers of the Republic (among them several who had helped to create it) in ceremonious procession to the château of Saint-Cloud and addressed Napoleon Bonaparte as Emperor of the French — and (was it possible?) Josephine Tascher-Beauharnais-Bonaparte as Empress of the French. It is related that Josephine accepted this first solemn homage with a slight, charming confusion; the whole day long she is said to have been radiantly happy. But the titles of Empress and Majesty impressed her very little, as if she had been born to them or at least had expected them all her life long. She is said actually to have enjoyed the whole new ceremonial only at the first large gala dinner, at which Joseph and Louis and their wives — and also Hortense — were already addressed as imperial princes and princesses, while her sisters-in-law Elisa and Caroline<sup>1</sup> were still called simply Mesdames Bacciochi and Murat, thereby so enraging them that they “choked with tears and gall.”

There now arose the most amazing reasons for Josephine to

<sup>1</sup> Of these the Duchesse d'Abrantès remarks that, as soon as they arrived, they looked for the best seats and straightway occupied them.

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take the holding of court (now beginning) seriously: the greatest names of old France made efforts to obtain for themselves offices at the "court of the parvenu." "Before these great names of Montmorency, Montesquiou, Ségur, and the like," writes Turquan, "Josephine seemed taken unaware, as if she were a little girl. In this new order of things it was not the gigantic superiority of her husband that flattered her most, not his genius as commander, nor his talent as organizer, administrator, and legislator; no, all this concerned her but little and was hardly worth her notice; what really filled her heart with joy was the fact that she had a Laroche-foucauld as lady-in-waiting." Now because of this comic-looking little Bonaparte she had become Empress and Majesty, and she was ready to play her life-role according to her understanding of it, if only she could be sure of remaining on this stage, which had now become so magnificent. But although Napoleon behaved to her as if she belonged in the fairy-tale as a matter of course, there arose a new, more alarming threat.

The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation had practically ceased to exist in the year previous, when Francis I assumed the title of Emperor of Austria — the Roman Empire which had been claimed as the inheritance of the Frankish rulers a thousand years before. It seemed to Napoleon that this thousand-year-old inheritance was now to be recovered, and by the new ruler of the Franks, who thus would take over and continue a greater tradition than simply that of the French kings: one which could be traced back from Charles the Great to Augustus and the world of the Romans, from which Napoleon's more real ancestress, the Revolution, had already borrowed its tokens and symbols. Thus he had made himself Emperor and not king. And who can say if the thought of anointment and coronation as Master of Christendom by the hand of the representative of God had not already taken deep roots in his Concordat? For there must be anointment at the



coronation in order to lend, to this Empire of the People, consecration by God's grace. Even then, by his command, all the old tracts on coronation ceremonies had been scrutinized; Saint-Denis and Reims had been rejected as too potent reminders of the kings (whose remains the same people who now acclaimed the new master had desecrated at Saint-Denis); Aix-la-Chapelle was being considered. But first it was necessary to induce the Pope to make the journey. That was not easy. Not, to be sure, that the freshly spilt blood of a descendant of the most Christian kings, Enghien, had frightened him; his hesitation was rather an advance political bargaining for a purchase-price which had not yet been offered. The fact that it finally became necessary to threaten a renunciation of the Concordat in order to persuade the Pope to come released Napoleon later on, as he desired, from any expression of gratitude for the service so reluctantly performed, which was also qualified by the papal request to have the coronation ceremonies held in Paris instead of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Although the actual arrival of the Pope was delayed for some time, still his promise could be relied upon. And here a new anxiety arose in Josephine's mind. Would Bonaparte — thus she could not help calling her husband — allow her to be crowned, too? Would he, if he were satisfied to have her crowned, also agree to a religious marriage ceremony, without which the Pope must regard her as unwed?

All the reasonable refutations to these worries by Hortense and the ladies-in-waiting, particularly Madame de Rémusat and Josephine's niece, Madame de La Valette, availed but little; why should Napoleon have made her Empress, why had he called her to his side at the great celebration in the Invalides, why, finally, had he taken her along in the late summer on that triumphal, imperial journey through the Rhineland, if he intended to set her aside? How could he now exclude her from the coronation which

would give her the security she longed for? But Josephine had attained a rapidly acquired and much practised mastery in answering all intelligent, reasonable proofs with a sad and obdurate "But still," when it was necessary to find an excuse for her lamenting and self-torture. It was ever thus when she felt the active opposition of the Bonaparte family, over whom she intended from the beginning to gain a final victory by succeeding in becoming the crowned Empress and by marrying Napoleon in a religious ceremony.

Even though in October, after the return from the Rhine journey, Napoleon's brothers and sisters, besides private petitionings, took an official step and appointed Joseph to ask their brother to dispense with the coronation of the barren Josephine, whom he would have to divorce sooner or later anyway, Napoleon nevertheless ordered Josephine to begin her preparations for the ceremony. It is said that even then she could not really believe in her luck and started the execution of his order with a throbbing heart. But it is safe to say that she carried on the preparations with an eagerness which did not overlook the smallest detail, that she studied the role assigned to her in the ceremony as zealously as she supervised the solution of every problem connected with the costumes of her train. Isabey, whose social talents had recommended him to Josephine and Hortense and who is said to have himself adorned Josephine for all important occasions, was, along with David (the "regicide," whose signature had been on the death-sentence of Alexandre Beauharnais and so many others), selected to design all the costumes. And on David devolved, besides, every detail of the entire function which was not prescribed by the ceremonial. Numerous rehearsals were held, the last ensemble rehearsals in Notre Dame itself; it was then that David conceived his great coronation picture.

Josephine's coronation mantle was of red-orange velvet, with embossed golden bees and a wide border of ermine, and had in

heavy embroidery olive and oak branches around the letter *N*; it was lined throughout with ermine and was of great weight. The crown (which together with the mantle and the ring formed the insignia of the Empress — the Emperor had, besides these, a sword and a sceptre) had — according to Constant — eight spikes which joined under a golden globe, overtopped by a cross. These spikes, studded with diamonds, were four in the shape of palm leaves and four in the shape of myrtle leaves. Their indentation was surrounded by a hoop of eight gigantic emeralds; the headband was adorned with amethysts. The diadem was composed of four rows of exquisite pearls, interlaced with a leaf design of perfect diamonds, several of which were very large: one weighed forty-nine carats. The stones of the crown alone cost over eight hundred and sixty thousand francs. For her ring there was a ruby “as a token of joy,” supplied by the crown treasury, while the ring of the Emperor carried an emerald as “a symbol of heavenly revelation.”

On the 25th of November, Pope Pius VII arrived in Fontainebleau — and until the last minute the mother Letizia had not been able to believe that the Holy Father would really incommode himself for this son of hers to whom she herself haughtily addressed her letters “to the Emperor Napoleon Buonaparte.” The whole court went to meet the Pope. Then, during the first visit of courtesy which Pius VII paid Josephine, she took heart and told “the old man, from whose deathly pale face there shone gentleness and goodness,” her anxiety and grave scruples of conscience: that she had had no religious marriage ceremony, since in those awful days of the Revolution it was not the custom. And the Pope, who had not known that he would also have to crown Josephine, the woman “with the evil reputation,” blessed her and left, promising that everything would be rectified.

And, as a matter of fact, Napoleon set no obstacle in the way of the expressed wish of the Pope. The marriage ceremony was

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quickly performed by Fesch, the Emperor's uncle, whose office of Cardinal could have been foretold even less easily than his nephew's imperial dignity; it took place in the private chapel, with two aides-de-camp as witnesses. And on a Sunday morning, the 2nd of December 1804, the cannons thundered through the heavy snow-fall, and the bells rang out over Paris, announcing the great festival. But as it was a festival which the new master was giving himself and his wife and not one of those which the nation rendered him, there were among the masses of spectators more curiosity and love for display than real enthusiasm. As the procession started, the heavens cleared, and in the sharp icy air there soon glittered and gleamed the gold and silver and colour of the uniforms, the drawn sabres, the plumes and ornaments: troops of every order, the imperial Mamelukes, then heralds in violet and gold, the overdressed Murat, once a clerk, now Marshal of France and Governor of Paris (and soon afterwards a King), then all the coaches, drawn by six horses, with the great dignitaries. Finally eight bay horses and the great gold state carriage, and in it the Emperor with plumed hat, gold-embroidered silk stockings, gold-lace-trimmed green coat, scarlet waistcoat, and green breeches. At his left sat Josephine, opposite her her son-in-law, Louis; and facing the Emperor was Joseph. "Josephine wore a white silk dress with long sleeves, dotted with gold bees and embroidered in gold and silver . . . the bodice and upper sections of her sleeves were spangled with diamonds. . . ." Then there was lace over her shoulders, a train of white gold-embroidered velvet with five yards of gold fringe, white gold-embroidered velvet shoes, and white gloves, also gold-embroidered. And a diadem — not the one she was to wear at the coronation — of pearls and diamonds, worth more than a million. And Josephine, glittering with every jewel imaginable, smiled and smiled, and even the least kindly among the witnesses spoke of her beauty on this her great day, when she looked scarcely thirty years old.

Then the ceremony in Notre Dame. Josephine's heavy coronation mantle was carried by the sisters and sisters-in-law of the Emperor. In order to persuade them to do this, Napoleon conceived the idea of officially changing the name of this duty from *carrying* the mantle to *supporting* the mantle. They took this change in designation so literally that Josephine, in ascending the steps, almost collapsed under its weight.

Now report after report might be mentioned which tried to render an exterior picture of the event for whose consummation every spell of tradition and symbolism, as well as the arts, had solemnly and sublimely been called forth, so that the great power of will made human might exalt and enjoy itself. But none of the reports which are to be found can tell anything of Josephine and her inner being and feeling as participator in this *actus solemnis*, in which the representative of God on earth anointed the wife (who like all the women there had her bosom exposed) after the impatient, yawning Bonaparte, but finally did not crown the two: for when this last highest moment arrived, Napoleon himself placed the crown on his own head and on Josephine's. Whatever the author may know of Josephine's feelings in this hour, he has made plain in what has gone before. He would rather let the reader find in all this whatever greatness and solemnity his inclination may visualize for him, and end the story of this *hora sacra* of an unholy life just as it occurred and as it was concluded. Napoleon's wilful gesture, which was intended to make the Pope "unnecessary, only a simple witness and a supernumerary," did not interrupt the Holy Father in his pontificate, to which the statutes have granted the crowning of so many worthy and unworthy people. Thus he spoke, after the solemn prayer for the Emperor, over the crowned and kneeling Josephine: "May God crown you with the crown of fame and justice; may He arm you with strength and courage; so that by virtue of our blessing you may attain in true faith, because

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of the manifold fruits of your good deeds, the crown of eternal empire, by grace of the One whose power and kingdom last from eternity unto eternity." And after Napoleon and Josephine had taken their seats under the canopy, the Pope blessed them again: "May you be strengthened on this imperial throne, and may you be allowed to rule in His eternal kingdom by Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who lives and rules with God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, from eternity unto eternity." Then the Pope broke into the "*Vivat Imperator in æternum,*" and the two choirs joined in, and great, rapturous music filled the church in all its recesses, where even the thousand candles of the imperial splendour did not shine and where, for the time being, the familiar shades of Notre Dame, those quiet keepers of many centuries of glory and sorrow, had withdrawn, biding their time.



## CHAPTER FIVE



# THE EMPRESS

The story of the Creole girl who became an Empress is now told — a little differently to be sure, than in the pretty fairy-tale which has been handed down from generation to generation of Frenchwomen. In that story, compiled of sentimental ambition, the golden cup of life encrusted with precious stones is first filled with sovereign goodness and then with noble, glorified renunciation, since certain brutal and undeniable facts have made the usual fairy-tale conclusion of glorious and joyful living impossible. But we must draw far away from the legend of the melancholy transfiguration and ever farther from what is otherwise in sensible stories prepared in the last chapters, the comforting formula, fraught with meaning or at least a point. For we can discover nothing of this in the unsettled dregs of the imperial life-bowl. Nor is there that life-mood which would supply even a better conclusion than that found by legend, the life-mood which Chateaubriand — who was a great poet, but an unreliable judge of men and events — has infused into Josephine. He sees in her despondency over a goal attained a feminine, September melancholy which surrenders to fate. Such intensification and modesty may at times fall to the lot of those whose fame and greatness have been attained through conflict. Perhaps great, ambitious, and gratified women, when the playtime of love and

fertility is past, may learn to feed upon the storehouse of earthly possessions. But Josephine, who had accepted Bonaparte because Ouvrard and those like him were not to be had, and who had entered into the entire imperial splendour as — well, as “ this Widow Beauharnais with the cheap respectability and the unlimited debts ” — how could such soil as Josephine was made of cultivate a garden of meditation in which the resigned, reflective soul is nourished?

True, there were many gardens and palaces and treasures, splendid carriages, noble horses, and many friends who bowed to her — among them great and rare people. But the gardens did not tempt her to reflective promenades, nor the groves and little temples to rest and meditation; in all the rooms she held no cheerful nor serious conversation with friends chosen from the mass of people; she took no pleasure in books, had no vibration, no current of feeling, for music. There was an unappeased tumult in Josephine; that was the only quality she had in common with Napoleon: an ever unsatisfied restlessness. But different as the measure of this unrest was, so different was everything else between these two people — their feeling for each other and their understanding of each other. The years were filled with incredible destinies, but their symptoms and names, with all the thunder and lightning, did not touch Josephine. The world was shaken by the tread of legions, but Josephine was so occupied by her own coming and going that she did not hear it. From the hundreds of thousands of lives ruined there stood out a few names from bloody places — but she thought as little of the death sown by her husband as of the fame reaped from it, and soon she even confused the names. She heard of victories and huge indemnities — and thought only of her debts. Napoleon created kingdoms, and she was annoyed because the Bonaparte clan rose to new honours. And finally the demon was seen more and more clearly in every act of Napoleon; there was a madness in him; the great flame burned dimly and no longer



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illuminated the path of delusion. What Josephine understood of those things — but all this is life and fate, the dregs in the cup. . . .

Many prefer simply to look at this ostentatious cup, to describe it accurately and thoroughly. But there are enough such descriptions: anyone who wants a picture of this court life, with its unhappy splendour and all its actors and figure-heads, should read the vivid and clever memoirs of Madame de Rémusat. She reproduces the entire richly ornamented tissue — what could be here shown of it would be so diminutive that the pattern would no longer remain visible.

It is as easy and natural to determine the above-mentioned limits to Josephine's life as it is difficult to define the meaning of past actions, to find colours in the wavering flame or set the changing outlines of the transitions. There is the sifting of the sand in the hour-glass, which enters the feeling of life only in a transferred and interpreted way — that feeling of life which is itself so full of unconscious sifting — and along with it the great playful importance paid to each grain of sand as it drops down, yet not an epicurean importance, but rather an animal-like innocent pleasure in the enjoyment of the moment. Always there are aims, intentions, prospects of things, which, when they come, are forgotten; there are always programs which have no ending; always the creed of living under the sign of great feeling and its dignity — when each moment the dainty, broken motion shows nothing of dignity or feeling, and the forms of life drop like grains of sand — the slaves and drugs of the little Eros; all this even though there is no longer a lover (or because there is none), for all sensuous desire is suppressed by the great censor and dares to appear only in a thousand disguises. In the days of papal Rome many laws were so severely enforced that they went unbroken, with the result that hundreds of winding alleys and joyful pathless ways opened up to the pro-

hibited desires; it was somewhat in this way that Josephine now spent her life. She was at what has long been called the dangerous age, when the autumnal burning of the senses in their death-struggle can still imitate a little the wild evil spring; and when, for some, insanity is the only release. But whatever of love had not dried up in Josephine took tight hold on her in its last form as greed for life; this she called her love for Napoleon, and its intensity was increased by the fear of losing "this last love" and thus also her power in the world. But such love was only an abstract without life-nourishment, and the power was something she coveted, but made no use of. And in the unconscious sadness of her body, which decayed without wearying, there remained the great inviolable law which prohibited the thing which she had so long wanted and enjoyed. Yet because an urgent, desirous nature never dies, hers played, as it had no faith nor strength of mind to sustain it, with its little living flames, filling its days with half-forbidden pleasures. She gave vent to sadly disguised whims and anxieties, to lamentation and hypochondria and whatever the unhappy veils of impulse may be called behind which an unused life spends and consumes itself.

The hypochondria, for instance, was extravagantly attended by all the care with which Josephine's feminine nature had surrounded the child she had expected so long — with cures of all kinds, baths, and far too many remedies. She rediscovered, from her childhood, that sickness creates indulgence, and she found spice in a heart-warming self-pity. Thus each little discomfort turned into an illness, and Napoleon's personal physician, the brave Corvisart, prescribed medicine after medicine until once, simply as an expediency, he gave her pills made of bread crumbs. The fact that this experiment effected a really miraculous cure made his professional conscience a little less scrupulous thereafter. But as the morose and bitter-sweet joys of self-torture must still be thought of in the place

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where the final hard cause contributed real pain, a glance must here be directed to what we have called the veil of impulse. Also a short answer will be attempted to the question of what really did exist in so much negation, what was right in so much wrong.

An arsis rang out when the discussions were concerned with her rearrangements and Malmaison. But little as there is any intention in this entire story to point an accusation or show a guilt, something must here be set down that sounds almost like an excuse. As there are people who are born out of time, and some who are unsuited to any time, so there are epochs which in a certain sense are ill-timed in themselves, as of them, favoured by decay of an old order, one or several great wills of the ebb tide of many lives, which all together are called a period, set a stage for their own special fate, whereon all the others must see to it that they, by a little fame or at least a contemporary feeling, derive something from its great cost. In this sense Josephine lived as the wife of the creator of an age, but in another epoch from Napoleon, because, since she was a creature outside of history, with no hero-worship of her husband, she took over a position, but not a mission — an obligation, but not the change of mind obligated by conviction — and because she was as little subdued by the mighty violator of the world as the peoples which were for a while believed to have been conquered. She had simply had to change the technique of “arranging” herself (but this was her forte). And thus she, who had been so willing to laugh and who had at times so cleverly practised the devices of self-enjoyment, lived in a clouded, unsuitable world in which she was unable to breathe — it is interesting to note how, by all her zeal to appear timely, she rose from the primitive world of her childhood into one which consisted in mad self-advancement. If the actualities of living did not pedantically and arrogantly make this the only possibility, one might here be tempted to paint a playful little parable: one night a strange ghost, a revolutionist of the

spirit world, draws forth the characters of novels and dramas in a library, and as they look with astonishment at the styles of their raiments and the manifold variety of their beings, the destroyer suddenly upsets their houses of books and drives them headlong into flight. Each character quickly seeks refuge in the first dark abode — and thus Philine chances into the Brothers Karamazov, Siebenkäs<sup>1</sup> finds himself with Madame Bovary, Manon Lescaut with Caliban — and Josephine with Napoleon.

But in order to end finally the preparation of the short report on the active details of this imperial life, a thing before mentioned must here be treated more emphatically: namely, the fact that Josephine in all her life had never *done* anything nor learned how to occupy herself with things, nor indeed ever thought of denying one whim (she always considered herself wronged by fate). Thus she lacked the foundation for a moral education, which Nietzsche characterizes as follows: “ For great self-control it is necessary first to practise small denials. That day is badly used, and a danger to the next, on which one does not forbid oneself a little something. . . . ”

In such a manner the inner as well as the outer circumstances, by their lack of preparation of any sort, combined in Josephine, with the effect that, for all her power — which still, to be sure, had the stimulating excitement of uncertainty — she knew but poorly what to do with herself and her imperial position. This inability to prove herself, this lack of any greatness, somehow gave her a glamour among the superior women students of popular world-history and altogether is an instructive indication of just what a people admire in a feminine ruler. And not only the great nameless masses, but individual persons and those close to the sovereign. Here, of course, that indefinable quality must be remembered which no recorder of a life can transmit, that witchery of a being

<sup>1</sup> The hero and title of a novel by Jean Paul.

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which is called loveliness or charm, a little of whose effect still remains noticeable on others who followed the same road of life. And as charm is everywhere in life one of the most effective means of bribery, which can, in the face of a matter morally and juristically clear, turn an accuser into an admiring defender, this word "charm" should here awaken in the recollection of every reader the great sorceries of human grace which he must have experienced in life and which have given more joy to his beautifully disturbed judgment than to any particular justice. Thus the reader may contribute something of his own, something that the impartiality of the author forbids him to add.

A sensible little sentence ever appears in the Josephine legend: that she furthered what is called, not quite accurately, in German *Handel und Wandel* (commercial activity). For the merchants are one section of the public which creates legend — and as they put into the obituary of an ordinary good buyer and debtor that he was a fine customer, so they, when the miracle of such a good client as Josephine befell them, painted a halo around her. Even when occasionally the payments met the disapproval of the highly uncongenial husband of the restless purchaser (for the merchants had learned to figure the possibility of such disapproval into their prices), Josephine's promotion of this "commercial activity" consisted first of all in her untiring desire to buy, her longing always for the best, the most beautiful, and the latest, and naturally also in the endless liberality of her means. Besides this she was unimaginably sensitive to the slightest approaching change in fashion; she felt a sort of rheumatic twinge beforehand for the shape of a sleeve or a *décolletage* which might be somewhat altered tomorrow; such an unlucky dress she never put on again, even if it had been worn only once. But this happened all too often with articles in her wardrobe; indeed, no such defect was necessary: for Josephine forgot what she had. And why not? — for in the Tuile-

ries, in Saint-Cloud, and in Malmaison there was room after room filled with all the "poupons and chiffons," as Napoleon called these costly vanities, which, after having been worn once or twice, disappeared into the vaults of the dressing-rooms. And then, after a few months, they were out of fashion, and the chambermaids realized considerable fortunes from the sale of this magnificent unused finery. Often Josephine recognized some of her especially striking creations when she suddenly saw them on other people — for instance, on the German princesses to whom they were sent as the latest and highest fashions from Paris. The best thing about clothes was the choosing of their materials, the long consultations over design and ornament, and, perchance, the first wearing. What came next was a question of space — what the past is to time — but with both of these she had never concerned herself for long. She cared only for buying, for the things she as yet did not have, for the vari-coloured stones and chips which would have formed the kaleidoscope of her world had she but seen them together. A fleeting smile greeted the splendour, and even if it had been a shout of jubilation, Josephine would have forgotten it the next day or would have been annoyed or bored. Half of everything she had was always given away, to relatives, to servants, no matter whom, and the remainder was kept only until it had to make room for new purchases. Taking one year arbitrarily, it is recorded that Josephine bought the following items for her wardrobe: "23 large pieces of lace, 7 large wraps, 136 dresses, 20 cashmere shawls, 73 corsets, 48 rolls of cloth, 87 hats, 71 pairs of silk stockings, 980 pairs of gloves, 520 pairs of shoes." For another year record is made of this: Josephine possessed 498 chemises (she changed her linen three times a day; chemises, bodices, and stockings are included in this; at that time she had only two pairs of riding-breeches, for she no longer rode). In that year it is estimated that she had 150 pairs of white silk stockings, 30 pairs of pink silk, and 18 of flesh-coloured

silk, which had to fit so closely that they could be worn without garters. Josephine then had 676 cloth dresses, 60 cashmere shawls, the most beautiful of which cost from eight to ten thousand francs. And it is asserted that she used to make cushions for her dogs from the loveliest of these shawls. The yearly allowance for her wardrobe was three hundred and sixty thousand francs; its actual cost, during her first years as Empress, was more than four times that figure. And as she "somehow" for the most part did not succeed in paying, although, in her greedy moments, it had seemed the easiest thing in the world to her, these undiscovered three quarters of her expenditures were at first not considered as debts; indeed, not until the creditors could no longer be quieted were they so recognized, and then only with violent accusations against fate. These settlements became increasingly more difficult in the course of the years. The effect on Napoleon of Josephine's tearful outbursts grew weaker and weaker, and she once complained of it in much the same manner as Napoleon did of the quickly forgotten effect of his victories — when Jena raised much less of an echo than Austerlitz had the year before. Finally Napoleon himself looked over the statements of all expenses incurred and simply took off more and more from each total. That in spite of all this the creditors still did not fare badly is proved by the fact that they continued to pay great attention to Josephine and sang her praises in a way which disgruntled merchants are not in the habit of doing.

But if, among the objects mentioned in the enormous lists of purchases Josephine made, there are some of the most incredible items, attractive for neither use nor beauty, still there are none of the things which might have been expected. For instance, Josephine bought no books whatever. Not that she did not occasionally read. But what she read were the obscene sentimental novels of the period, which were found for a few weeks in the drawing-rooms and which she constantly borrowed from her ladies-in-waiting.

Often as Josephine imparted lifelong joy to authors (and there were some of note), with skilfully turned remarks of flattery on their books; often as she, when occasion arose, let fall a graceful word for the older works — that is, those which were accepted as worth while — she had no past with books, nor any effective recollection of them. Thus what share she had in the French world of mind and culture came diluted and ready-made. Also the experience was denied her of living again in the re-reading of a favoured volume. Josephine's life had a definite flow, even though unmarked by those stones, posts, and bridges which books can be; as, on the contrary, Alexandre Beauharnais's life, which had no flow, was plentifully dotted with such guide-posts, arbitrarily placed. And while Napoleon, with his thousandfold duties, could find time to read through a really enormous library and grasp everything that stirred him, Josephine only sampled even the sort of book she chose herself, often having others tell her the ending. The only occasions on which she came into contact with deep and noble books (more as an instrument than a reader, however) were on those nights when Napoleon asked her to read aloud to him, for he still loved the sound of her richly modulated voice.

In comparison with the money spent on herself, which occupied Josephine so much, the expenditures for "charity" are proportionately very small. Josephine was "charitable" in the way prescribed to her; she gave willingly and abundantly from a good heart, often too much, often not the right thing; she was easily and quickly moved; indeed, she often gave the impossible: the promises of an Empress, which often could not be fulfilled. And as in the revolutionary years she had made a practice of recommending people, at a time when she had no position or, at best, only a false one, she continued now with better effect; she created many a quandary for ministers and dignitaries, but she succeeded so far in her efforts that still today there are many families in



France which have themselves forgotten that they take their origin from the son of a hairdresser, a linen seamstress, or the nephew of an animal-keeper in the service of Josephine. To the frequently unintentional charitable expenses there may be opposed a body of wholly intentional disbursements which had a contrary end in view, a long list of costly and wrong expenditures — for instance, the following: when Josephine was informed that Pauline and her husband, the rich and foolish Count Borghese, were shortly to pay her the prescribed visit, and when she learned that her detested sister-in-law would on that occasion wear a dress of deep green, she had the drawing-room in which she was accustomed to receive such ceremonial visits hastily redecorated at great cost — even to wall-paper, furniture, coverings, and rugs — in a shade of blue such as would make the green dress appear glaring and vulgar.

Considerable a part of Josephine's time as all this filled, it nevertheless remained only a part, and, besides, the least imperial. But the splendour, to be sure, bestowed upon her with crown and mantle is to be found nowhere else in her whole life except in the circumstance that she was called Empress, as formerly she had been called Beauharnais. And as Josephine had at that time submitted to the demands of Alexandre and Aunt Renaudin, who together formed her circle of life, she now, as there was no alternative, submitted to the duties of her position. But they were really not hard to bear, even when the endless demands of so-called fashionable life are considered. For just then after the Revolution much of the dogma of this form of life had disappeared — the dogma which a hundred years before had, along with the privilege of a certain standing, decreed definite duties and made the cohesion of such standing dependent upon the mastery of the high art of conversation and a share in the intellectual civilization of the nation. In the new social mosaic, which the imperial putty did not hold together very tightly and in which the heated constraint of a hero cult made the rise of

new comfort difficult, these duties of an elegant way of life had become freer and easier than they were even a hundred years later. For while in our day attendance in the strange way of living called elegant demands at least dexterity and a special knowledge of a variety of sports, a pretended mastery of several languages, and a certain attitude and social discipline, Josephine could defray all the claims of society made upon her simply from her natural disposition. Besides her knowledge (usual in her sort of memory) of persons, families, and their relation to one another, and her good although not always reliable taste, she needed none of the resources which are acquired by learning — French was the only language she spoke — and since she really had become the first lady in the Empire, she forced herself to keep up a certain attitude only when she was in the mood. Hence these duties as Empress really did not weigh so very heavily on her, as they were, to Josephine, simply social duties with a slightly different accent. Had she not by nature been averse to everything that goes by the name politics, Napoleon's strict order for her to keep herself at a distance from all affairs of government would at any rate have taken from her all possibility for such activity. Besides, without her ever noticing it in a practical way, she had never been granted any of the imperial privileges which were constitutionally guaranteed in a degree to her successor and later to the wife of her grandson Louis-Napoleon, Eugenia de Montijo. Napoleon, who once warningly wrote his mother that his was a family in the political sense, thus considered Josephine as outside that family, either because he feared the danger of a nature such as hers in a position of political power or because there was always in his mind the thought that some day he would be obliged to part from Josephine.

To carry through her purely representative duties as Empress could give Josephine no difficulty, for everything she had to do, say, or pass over was prescribed for her beforehand to the most mi-

nute detail, so that she really had to be only “graceful, elegant, and obedient.” She was dictated to, not only by the master of ceremonies, Count Ségur, who had served his apprenticeship at the old court, or by the adviser given her, who bore the title of librarian and whose far-reaching knowledge of personalities and family affairs of the people in high positions in France and all Europe was like a living reference-book to her; no, in addition, Napoleon, with all his varied occupation, himself undertook this task in the highest degree. “The smallest details were attended to: the number of carriages, servants, pieces of luggage, horses; the route of the journey, the resting-places, the night quarters in each town, the people whom the Empress could have at table. . . . Besides this, Napoleon had so little confidence in the answers Josephine might make to welcoming addresses offered her by deputations and heads of the towns she passed through that he dictated these answers himself. A copy was made of each of them, and before she set out on a journey, Josephine had to learn these improvisations by heart. . . . Thus you could see her, from early morning, with a large manuscript in her hand, trying to retain in her head, so unaccustomed to study, all the words and phrases, without making any effort to understand them, like a pupil who learns a lesson parrot-wise. . . .”

Difficult as this committing to memory was for Josephine, still she always submitted to it, because she knew that the replies would be printed in all the newspapers, and, what was more, she never was at all sure of her presence of mind in the face of the frequently high-flown addresses, which often moved her to laughter. Much more regrettable did she find the regulations and limitations on the audiences which she had to grant, for these were often quite amusing, as she could meet entirely new people there, let them relate things to her, question them, and occasionally, where impoverished noblemen were concerned, hear all kinds of gossip. Much of the gossip which reached her in this or other ways she repeated to

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Napoleon, who in his grim fashion was amused by it, at least until later when his pleasure was lessened by the realization that Josephine used a great many of his actions as material for her gossip.

If the necessary meetings with Napoleon's relatives are left aside, the remaining duties of the Empress consisted only in banquets and receptions. For those she needed no instruction, and certainly none from Napoleon; there she was in her real element; she had the advantage over Napoleon of her long schooling in tact, which was acquired by her endless contacts and developed in many precarious situations. Napoleon's will was always upon her, even in the details of her entire day, but Josephine was, as Napoleon has said, truly good-natured and tractable; thus she often did not even notice what regulations were made for her; therefore she barely noticed how often she overstepped or simply forgot those rules, especially when the dictator was far away; altogether she managed her life "as in a girl's school when the teacher is absent."

Josephine's day began with the bath — quite unlike that of her predecessor in the Tuileries, Marie-Antoinette, whose ablutions extended only to those parts of her body not covered by her clothes. (In this habit of thorough bodily cleanliness Napoleon may, indeed, have been the pupil of his first love.) This was followed by a toilet which with the years took more and more time and became increasingly complicated, making up her face requiring the greatest care. Although Josephine in a few years spent more for rouge, powder, and other cosmetics than the purchase-price of Malmaison had amounted to and as a matter of course used only the best, nevertheless over a number of years the application of cosmetics, then of doubtful quality, finally began to show. Just what her complexion really was like, no one can say, for no one ever saw her "not made up." But apparently the skin on her cheeks and under her chin had become quite flabby from the constant use of thick layers of rouge, so that its further application became increasingly difficult.

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And when it was put on, it sometimes did not stay, but peeled off in layers like plaster from a wall, transforming Josephine into a veritable "*chien d'humeur*." Whether or not her hair, as was told, began to turn grey in her fortieth year and thereafter owed to artifice its colour of chestnut-brown with reddish-gold lights is uncertain. It is certain, however, that no one ever saw her hair to the roots; the fashion of the times — the head-dresses of combs, veils, artificial flowers, and so on, with only a single curl on an otherwise bare forehead — was of great use to her.

With such preparations Josephine's mornings passed. Then she went, a lace handkerchief in her always gloved hand, through the antechambers to the audience room. After the audiences the ladies who had been invited to the Empress's luncheon-table awaited her, usually about eight or ten. Napoleon, who liked to spend little time at his meals, generally lunched alone, for Josephine, although she ate almost nothing of the abundant *déjeuner* for fear of increasing her weight, liked to sit long at the table, except on the occasions of the Sunday or holiday dinners, at which those members of the Bonaparte family who happened to be in Paris participated, under Napoleon's orders.

The afternoon walks (also always in company) which were usual at Malmaison and Saint-Cloud did not take place in the Tuileries. There the afternoons were spent receiving merchants, and not infrequently soothsayers and fortune-tellers with cards, for whom Josephine had a skeptical but nevertheless passionate predilection; also at needlework, romps with the dogs, incessant chatter with the ladies-in-waiting. Then came tea, again in the company of women; Josephine usually ate more heartily of the good things passed round then, as she sometimes went to no other meal; for Napoleon, who was wont to have dinner with her, often, in the midst of his work, forgot all about it. After tea came another toilet, quite as long as the one in the morning, and then began the waiting

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for Napoleon to call for dinner. When, after dinner, she did not go to any of the four theatres found suitable for her, or when there was no performance in the palace itself, or when one of the concerts which Napoleon enjoyed so much was not given, Josephine played billiards or a game of cards with guests or the ladies of her court. And she always tried, to the annoyance of the Emperor, to drag out the evenings as long as possible, as if night must finally bring something special.

This whole arrangement of life was, to be sure, often upset by the one who had ordained it. At the most unforeseen moment Napoleon would issue an order to have the horses harnessed and would take Josephine for a ride or for dinner and the night to Malmaison or to one of the other palaces in the environs of Paris. Josephine knew far less than perhaps Talleyrand, Rœderer, or Fouché to what sudden demands of Napoleon she would have to submit. Thus it might happen that he, dressed in travelling clothes and intending to go to Germany, would suddenly of an evening enter her room, and that she, a few minutes later, having obtained permission to go with him, would sit beside him in the coach. But if the Emperor left her behind, as the time at Mayence, then soon another excellently devised program of travel and life was put into effect.

Mention must here be made of another duty of a monarch: sitting for portraits on all possible occasions and also for the furthering of art. These sittings seem to have given Josephine as much pleasure as in former years her ceaseless admiration of herself in the mirror had; perhaps because from them she could see quite pleasant reflections of herself. Thus she continually discovered new reasons for portraits of every description, and even paid the artists generously from her own money when no suitable reason, in view of the commissions already executed, could be found for new paintings. And each of these portraits gave occasion for exciting consultations over dress, hair decoration, and pose, not only with the artist, but with



JOSEPHINE, EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH, IN 1814  
*Painting by François Gérard, in the Château of Malmaison*





whoever offered himself as adviser. The fact that occasionally the opinion of a hairdresser carried more weight than the idea of a painter is a failing which Josephine had in common with most of the elegant women of all ages who have sat for their portraits. Advice from such quarters may have often even been instrumental in the choice of a painter. For among the many who drew, painted, and modelled Josephine's image in every imaginable technique, there are, aside from the few masters, numberless unknown artists who rank far below the fashionable level of the times. Besides the considerable number of pictures which men such as Gérard, Gros, Prudhon, and Isabey painted (not to mention the minor ones), there are a number of replicas; for instance, Josephine sat to Gérard alone eight times. And the number of miniatures she ordered was simply enormous. Beginning with those of Isabey, which consisted of about thirty ivory plates of her, there are to be found many images, varying in quality, of Josephine — framed miniatures, snuff-boxes, and medallions — in a number of collections. And who can tell how many remain as heirlooms, privately owned? For Josephine gave these objects away as generously as she gave everything else; they were presented to princely visitors as well as to poor petitioners, to marshals as well as to gardener's apprentices.

But as to the likenesses themselves: the artists, almost without exception, had known Josephine for many years, when, instead of purple and legend, the still abundant sweetness of her much loved charm was about her. Thus almost all of them, particularly Isabey and Prudhon, have infused a glow into the embers, a tender languish into the weariness, and into the definitely matronly features a soft tautness of the years gone by, when life was still to be desired, when the blood throbbed and there were foolish, passionate games for undreamed-of stakes. There must have been, for a long time, in Josephine's smile a great afterglow which made one forget the brownish teeth, and in the gait and movements of her body,

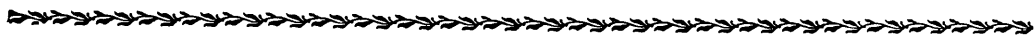
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which was becoming heavier, a still very lovely harmony of ageless grace. The charming glances, the many friendly words, and her still seductive attention must often have banished the knowledge which everyone possessed of the unlimited querulous violence of her small jealousies, and the undignified conversation about every detail, great and small, concerning the imperial marriage (which anyone in the vicinity could hear). Thus these pictures, in all their variety, preserve quite accurately Josephine's image of herself, which had grown into her consciousness since her thirtieth year and which the artists had to divine and invent.

Herewith this catalogue of Josephine's conduct as Empress should end. Although it can be seen that the imperial status demanded neither too many nor too oppressive duties, nevertheless it is only just to point out beforehand what the following chapter will record: that sovereignty imposed one duty on Josephine to which she would not have submitted in any other state and to which she — just because she was the sovereign — finally had to submit, even though bitterly and with little grace.



## CHAPTER SIX



### FAREWELL

The most graphic means of describing the already mentioned reversal of relationship between Josephine and Napoleon is denied the recorder. Whereas he showed by the blind ecstasy and lamentation in the letters of the young Bonaparte that love cannot beget love, it is now denied him to illustrate, in letters of the ageing woman, that love — or what she believed to be love — cannot hold love. For there are no such letters. Hortense, who knew too much about her mother, had already begun that special sort of Beauharnais-Tascher management of her part of the Napoleonic private world which always arranged events as they should have taken place. (A variation of a statement of Nietzsche's comes to mind: My memory says: she has done this — my pride says: she could not have done this — and finally my memory yields.) In such a way, along with many other documents on Josephine's life, most of her written statements from previous times as well as from this period of her great grief have been suppressed; these certainly would have explained many things and would, surely, have borne witness for Josephine time and again. Thus the late glow of this woman's life can be related only from the manifold reports which other people have left concerning it.

Those two contradictory assertions that Josephine loved only

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Napoleon and cared little for her position in the world, and, secondly, that the position meant everything to her, Napoleon being only a means to an end, both seem to be exaggerated. If one sets against the first the long list of undoubted proofs of Josephine's social ambitions, and against the second her just as undoubted desire for affection, and her need for what we have called the love-drug, a correct understanding may be had of Josephine's feeling for Napoleon — with its entirely feminine confusion of affirmation and negation, of nature and society, of sensitiveness and calculation. Only one real love-letter from Josephine to Napoleon has been preserved, and that dates from the time of the consulship. In it are sentences of self-forgetful and devoted affection, such as only a genuine feeling could produce, even though that feeling may have been neither great nor lasting. This letter, together with many petty, malicious, and blindly selfish actions and statements of Josephine's during her later married life, constitutes the truth about her feelings, a truth which, when it deals with the feelings of mediocre souls, is always very complex.

But to gloss over the present events in Josephine's life, as many do, with the before-mentioned "It was probably not so bad" shows a scanty knowledge of human nature; and to assert that there was nothing tragic in all these occurrences, because of the insignificance of Josephine's stake, betrays an entirely arrogant view-point, with a limited knowledge of life. For whatever Josephine's stake may have been, it was all she had — and no matter how Josephine's "heart" is to be judged, it was a human heart, which, since her submission, had placed the whole contents of its life on a unity that meant Napoleon *and* the position, and which therefore trembled and suffered for that unity.

After all, real tragedy does come to the personality which is affected by external events. Outside occurrences, such as the death of a beloved person, disappointment in friendship, impoverishment,

political oppression, and the like, can, in a vigorous personality, be turned to positive account; replies can be found to them which, in spite of everything, widen the scope of life in wisdom, goodness, and knowledge. To the vigorous organism the real tragedy comes in a denial of outside happenings, when no reply to them can be found in creative endeavour and when, thus, stagnation, lamentation, and despondency anticipate death.

Although we do not wish to be so solemn or pathetic as those who have placed Josephine, as a melancholy figure, in the pantheon of great lovers, still we must precede everything which has to be told in this chapter with the statement that Josephine was completely convinced that she now gambled for the last card in her game of life. The sort of self-knowledge which she possessed did not allow her to understand that eventually she would find one more card with which she could continue her game as long as she lived.

Since the fact, which at first had been so incomprehensible, had become almost a reality — namely, that “the little Bonaparte,” whom Josephine had considered her absolute property, wanted to divorce her — this threat had at times vanished from her consciousness, but never entirely from her passion for life. The triumph over the Bonaparte family which she and Hortense had gained by her coronation was soon followed by Napoleon’s coronation in Milan, which again made her anxious, as she participated in it only as a spectator. And the ceaseless work of the clan continued. But Josephine had almost become accustomed to this accompaniment to life, when all at once an event aroused her to the realization that the incessant agitation against her by the imperial hangers-on might in the end not be aimless.

For the last few years Josephine had tormented Napoleon with jealousy, had watched over him, and had let herself be carried away, making scenes in the presence of the most undesirable witnesses. This jealousy was not only that which was natural to a woman of

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her age who refuses to forfeit the rights she considers belonging to her, much less grant them to someone else; it was not only the quickly blazing jealousy of a woman with Josephine's past, who considers every other woman accessible and adventurous — no, there was mixed with it a poison of a special order, which caused each of these thorns to burn and fester. She had, whenever she had been reproached with her sterility, pointed to Eugène and Hortense, saying that there was no proof that the fault was not Napoleon's. And she had repeated it so often and so stubbornly that finally Napoleon himself began to doubt his procreative powers. And now every real or imagined sign of dawning affection for a woman on Napoleon's part meant for Josephine not only a jealous fear and bitterness, torture to her love, pride, and vanity, but also a fear which sometimes amounted almost to madness: that a child might result from some love-affair.

The interest suddenly displayed by the Emperor for one of the readers of his sister Caroline, Éléonore Denuelle de la Plaigne, could not escape gossip, which had developed in the environs of the court to a perfectly functioning apparatus; neither did the fact that some time later the lady was forced to leave Caroline's service for reasons of health, and that in due time in secrecy she bore a child for whose maintenance Napoleon made the necessary provisions through intermediaries.

Thus the Emperor no longer doubted his powers, and Josephine lost her most effective means of defence; so the word "divorce," when it became audible, sounded more threatening. But when no new jealousy quickened Josephine's hearing, when for a time the boring of the family into her affairs was not particularly noticeable and no one let fall any coarse allusions in her presence, she at times surprisingly failed to notice the most dangerous manifestations of this threat. Although she must have known that Napoleon would not leave her for any of the women with whom he carried on his

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proverbially trivial adventures, she nevertheless raved and fumed, forgetting any genteel attitude, at each appearance of these comets, although they all spent themselves overnight — and her jealousy was appeased only when she herself was allowed to choose one of her ladies for a fleeting play with Napoleon.

Although Josephine could not doubt that Napoleon's attachment for her was based not only on the recollection of his great love and the conjugal perseverance of a clannish personality, but also on the appreciation of certain qualities in her, she not only was oblivious of the waning of the attachment, but did everything she could to destroy the effects of those qualities so dear to her husband. When Napoleon had over a certain period made good the consequences of her extravagance and had one evening been delighted with her charm and success at a reception, the next day something was sure to happen which offended his imperial dignity — she would lower herself with undesirable people — or perhaps there was a veritable eruption of bad temper or a lava stream of jealousy, which scorched the reawakened flower of his old affection. Because of his growing contempt for people and because of the incessant and enormous strain under which he lived and to which those usual safety-valves humour and friendship were denied, Napoleon had grown accustomed to consider it his sole privilege to let himself go. Although Josephine was then not the great lady, to whom the sovereign attitude is part of nature, which she had once seemed to him, she should have remained for him what he understood as a real lady — but this occasionally she utterly failed to be. Thus, after all the scenes and outbursts of jealousy, there were often really violent reconciliations — but something clung to them which he now understood as Josephine's weakness, something which formerly he had regarded as her charm and allurements.

According to a statement of Metternich's, who knew him, from many long talks, more intimately than most of those who were near

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to him, the thing which in other people is called *education* was not very important to Napoleon. What he needed from time to time, he learned quickly or accomplished by improvisation. His knowledge and opinions were useful to him in much the same way as are fish to a man who keeps a well-stocked pond: he angled with necessarily good luck during his incessant fishing in all the spirit waters. But the genial improvisator had himself little of the spiritual serenity and surety which belong to a naturally grown, though average, mental organism; just as the most successful upstart possesses nothing of the inner calm of a nobleman who is otherwise insignificant. Thus it happened that Josephine often irritated him by stating her ignorant judgments, while her "uneducated questions," which had so delighted the lover, were no longer to him expressions of a lovely simplicity. To this was added the way she spoke of his battles, his successes. He has thus given expression to his impatience in a letter: "I see with grief that you are an egoist, that the success of my arms is nothing for you to admire." It had evidently become a matter of course for Josephine to expect of Napoleon success and great victories. Hence finally she saw nothing very extraordinary in them. And when, sometimes in her letters to Hortense, she wrote news of the campaigns, the references are usually only a few sentences in length, or perhaps merely incidental facts strewn among the family gossip. So the ever more noticeably obtuse appearance of her lack of understanding of the importance of his actions and the entire absence of admiration and worship caused his feeling for Josephine to become more and more a mere habit of life. And to the fading allurements of the ageing Josephine was added her insincerity, her capriciousness, the absence of control which demanded increasing latitude in his way of feeling. Thus in the cooled heart of the lonely man, who was everywhere surrounded by flatterers and petitioners, the sterility of this woman may at times have turned into that bitterness to which he gave expression on the eve of his



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coronation, with the sigh which had become audible: "To whom shall I leave all this?"

Although there are no letters by Josephine, there are enough by Napoleon to her. And as from those written during the first Italian campaign an opinion of her can be formed, the letters of Napoleon during the last years of their marriage not only give an unequivocal explanation of his changed attitude toward Josephine, but also elucidate the final situation into which this marriage had fallen.

A recent writer, Arthur Lévy, says that Napoleon wrote to Josephine about his campaigns in much the same manner as a merchant on the road writes to his wife about his business agreements and successes; and, at that, one might add, a merchant who is quite as conscious of his wife's ignorance of business in general as of her lack of interest in his particular branch. A few excerpts from those letters may show how far Napoleon had travelled away from Josephine since the days of Arcole and Rivoli. Whoever knows the many letters which that tireless correspondent wrote to other people during those years, or remembers his bulletins and proclamations, will find betrayed in the tone of the conjugal business-letters Napoleon's opinion of Josephine's interest in his news. There is, for instance, the one written after the battle of Austerlitz: ". . . I have defeated the Russian and Austrian armies, commanded by the two Emperors. I have tired myself out a little, as I camped in the open for eight days, and the nights were quite cool. But tonight I have my quarters in the castle of Count Kaunitz, where I shall sleep two or three hours. . . ." Or another, written a week after the battle at Jena: "Wittenberg, October 23, 1806, midnight. I have received several letters from you. I write only a word: my *affairs* are in good shape. Tomorrow I shall be in Potsdam, and on the 25th in Berlin. I am in excellent health, the exertion agrees with me. I am glad you are with Hortense and Stephanie, in good company. The weather until now has been beautiful. . . ." Then one on

the following day from Potsdam: "I have been in Potsdam since yesterday, my dear, and shall stay here today. My affairs still satisfy me. My health is good, the weather very beautiful. Sans-Souci I find very pleasant. . . ." And not a word of his emotion in the work-room and at the grave of the great Frederick; no word of the "proudest trophy," the sword. A week later: "Talleyrand has just come and tells me, my dear, that you do nothing but cry. What is the matter? You have your daughter, your grandchildren, and good news; you have reasons enough to be happy and content. The weather here is excellent; during the entire campaign not one drop of rain fell. I am quite well, and everything is progressing better and better. . . ." Or the following one: "Berlin, November 2, 1806. I have just received your letter of October 26. We have beautiful weather here. You will see from the bulletin that we have taken Stettin; this is a very strong fortress. All my affairs are excellent, and I am quite satisfied. . . ." Or: "I am in Posen, the capital of Great Poland. The cold weather is beginning; I am well. I shall undertake a journey into the interior of Poland. My troops are before the gates of Warsaw. Farewell, my friend, thousands of good wishes. I embrace you cordially."

These few specimens are enough. From the following letters, concerning the journey to Poland, Josephine's replies are as clearly understood as the epistles of the young Bonaparte during the Italian campaign ten years before. A reversal has now taken place, the roles have been miserably exchanged. Now Josephine writes urgent, pleading, tearfully imploring letters to Napoleon, asking him to let her come to Warsaw — and he, who once had yearned for her so burningly and called for her so wildly and sadly, puts her off, quietly pointing out the bad weather, the very poor roads, and the great distance. Finally these excuses turn into an absolute denial of her request, and Josephine, after long waiting and many outbursts of despair, gives up the journey. This tremendous desire of Joseph-

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ine's to set out in December on the long and difficult road from Mayence to Poland is explained by two passages in Napoleon's letters. The first: "All these Polish women are really very French." The second, on the following day (probably replying to an anxious insinuation concerning the dangers of the beautiful Polish women): "You tell me that I do not read your letters . . . and you add that you are not jealous. I long ago perceived that angry people always assert that they are not angry, that those who are afraid say they are not afraid; thus you are convicted of jealousy . . . but you are wrong; I think of nothing less than that; in the wilderness of Poland one thinks very little of such beauties. . . ." What follows, however, is treacherous enough: "Yesterday the provincial nobility gave a ball in my honour: quite beautiful women, quite rich, and quite badly dressed, although in the Parisian fashion."

Of the great ball which had been tendered him after his arrival in Warsaw, however, and of the meeting which took place at it, the meeting which justified Josephine's ominous paroxysms of jealousy, he wrote as little as Josephine formerly had of the existence of Charles. But if Napoleon, unblinded by his idea of power, at that time had still been able to notice any living being, this twenty-two-year-old Polish woman — whom he met at the ball and whose soul, according to his own words, was as beautiful as her angelic face — might have become for Josephine *the* great danger. For in addition to the advantage of her youthful beauty the Countess Maria Walewska really possessed that gentleness of being which Napoleon had once imagined Josephine to have, and, in addition, an undecieving constancy of soul in which love once awakened became fate. But with all his love for this sincere and beautiful being who gave him the only simple affection of his life — and who, from that time on, preserved the only feminine fidelity of his entire existence — the thought never once occurred to him to make this happy attachment lasting. Not even later, when Maria Walewska,

after the meeting in Vienna, became pregnant and bore him a son.<sup>1</sup> Who could have prevented the master of power from making the bold little stroke of such a marriage? Who would have denied recognition to the nobly born young mother of his child? But his desires were dim and dark; he wanted everything at once: not to renounce the love-adventure, not to lose Josephine, in spite of all that had happened, but still to have a legitimate bearer of his heir, a “belly” solely, as he said — although in his mind that was a requisite for any woman worthy of the crown.

From Warsaw and these weeks of love (whose afterglow was brought consolingly to him by Maria Walewska during his first exile, when Josephine was dead and the other had left him), there are more letters from Napoleon to Josephine than during a long time either after or before; the bad conscience of the husband, who was in spite of everything a patriarchal Corsican, did not allow him to ignore in silence so much earnest urging and pleading. But his command to Josephine to stop the ugly crying, to be cheerful and enjoy herself, and his not very convincing general reasoning succeeded only in finally forcing her return to Paris — and in bringing down on him further miserable letters from her. A remark in one of these communications shows just how far jealousy and anxiety had brought Josephine, a remark which amused Napoleon and to which he answered that she had only taken a husband to be with him. When it is understood that she at last wrote even *him* that she cared nothing for fame, that happiness was her fame, the somewhat instructive answer from the better memory of Napoleon becomes intelligible: her heart was excellent, but her judgment weak; she felt splendidly, but reasoned not so well.

Now, as to Josephine's place in all this: much as she indulged her heart in jealousy, and her nature in outbursts of panic, she still

<sup>1</sup> This is the Count Walewski who, under the Second Empire, played such an honourable role as diplomat and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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thought deeply and zealously of Napoleon or (and at this she was more successful) talked about him. But it was not that sort of reasoning by which one visualizes a person loved and through which, later on, one assembles and analyses every feeling in a newer and stronger way. It was rather the kind of meditation with which a hypochondriac muses on his disease, or a prisoner wonders about his jailer — on the whole, therefore, not the kind of reasoning that could do justice to Napoleon's personality. If Josephine was not worried about the burning problems of his faithfulness, her position, or simply the fundamental idea of always being in the right, her ill humour was caused by details so important to her as, for instance, the requirements regarding elegance, manners, and the like, in which Napoleon, it must be admitted, did not always appear any too well. And as she could not discover any greatness in the peculiar qualities of the personality of her husband (which were so annoying to her), she let herself go in irritable exhibitions at everything in him which disturbed her (this is so easy when one has only a partial understanding of a person), and she obtained from all her meditation only a vivid representation of what her feelings already knew only too well, and never found that living comfort which insight into the total being of an individual must grant. She did not even find the small remedies of a self-indulgent vanity, or comfort in the thought that such a great man could be so petty.

As willingly as Josephine had submitted to guidance when she had felt secure in the life chosen — although filled with renunciation — so later her nature, or the convictions which become nature, began daily a small revolt against the weaknesses and “impossibilities” of her lawmaker, when the security of the law threatened to become ever more doubtful — in this respect she behaved to Napoleon in much the same way as France itself. But these were not only the years in which the youthful appearance of Napoleon — which had become noticeable only when everything was at an

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end — gradually was reshaped into that of a stout little fanatic, which Tolstoi, with more malicious impressiveness than any of his contemporaries, described in *War and Peace*; rather they were the years when, from the cover of his smug bourgeois position, the malicious, misanthropic man of narrow origin peeped forth revengefully. It was the time when all his admiration for men and prototypes had been extinguished, when his power had become the soul of the world, when Chateaubriand's regret that genius existed only for imitation had already been overtaken by this ego which felt in itself the history of the world. To be sure, Napoleon still knew how to use the charm of greatness, when he wanted to captivate someone — Goethe, the Tsar, Metternich, for instance, and even at times soldiers and children — by being as simple with them as he almost always had been with Josephine. But she looked upon this simplicity as something which had become easy, habitual; it was not in her to sense greatness unhallowed by tradition.

Who does not know something of the catalogue of evil qualities, great and small, of malice, of pettiness, which has been handed down about Napoleon? Of his sudden outburst of anger during which he broke up furniture, of his spying on his entire entourage, because of which no letter or private life was any longer secure, of his spiteful pleasure in scandal, of the lies and the small discomforts he could inflict on the people around him, and, finally, of the notorious pinching of the ear-lobe, by which he liked to express a momentary approval of men or women? But where his fate, which he himself said was stronger than his will, finally brought him with all this is summed up in the words of a man not unkindly disposed toward him, de Pradt, who often conversed with him: “The Emperor is composed of cunning — cunning coupled with power — but he thinks more of his cunning. To him triumph means nothing, crafty capture (*attraper*) is everything. ‘I am crafty,’ he has told me a hundred times.” Although this characteristic of Napoleon's

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should be mentioned here only in its relation to Josephine, nevertheless a general judgment of Michelet's may be added, as it sums up the effect of this quality: "He has the fearful honour of having strengthened and developed an evil which is all too natural to mankind, the adoration of brute power, and the worship of success."

Nothing of this effect is to be observed in Josephine. She existed as would doubtless the companion of a great and dangerous writer or thinker, who does not read her husband's works and whose participation in his life consists, with the exception of the material success, only in feeling the depressions and the ill-humoured peculiarities which accompany the process of creation, and who perhaps, while the world resounds with the echo of these works, says to herself: "Yes, such is he," and for the rest resigns herself to the daily round of her husband's world of action. But to observe this world of Napoleon's activity as it can be seen through Josephine is a melancholy procedure and calls up those strangling thoughts which one tries so hard to avoid: what can become of love in people, and what so often becomes of people in love. It is reserved for the poet of tragicomedy, as yet unrisen, to write, from all the human failings of Napoleon, by either guessing or construing them, what he can perceive in the troubled depths of this abyss of love. We have recorded the truth of this love-affair of two people (which blossomed in one of them too early, in the other too late) and have tried to show the outcome. What is to be deduced from the effect of Napoleon on Josephine is told all too soon. Who does not know the apparent adaptability of women in love who imbibe the life-sphere of the loved one and who are, for the duration of the emotion, so filled with his actions and interests that while love lasts, even knowledge and ideas which they have never experienced before come to them, and, of course, usually take flight — like the gain which one occasionally enjoys in addition to the pleasure of gambling? Little as we know of Josephine's relation to Hippolyte Charles, it is cer-

tain that she, like all women really in love, shared the rather small interests of this amusing climber and knew more about his affairs than can be explained by her hope of participation in gain. One searches without success for any such tokens of love in Josephine's life, for any "melting" into her husband's sphere, even when this marriage of convenience had so strangely turned into a marriage of love. It must be realized that Josephine's renunciation of Charles and his kind was actually the only result which Napoleon could expect from her adaptable submissions; for this apparent adaptiveness and submissiveness were really nothing but the finely nerved ability to conform to changed circumstances of life. Napoleon, of course, has been named as the object of the emotion of this woman in love with love; but of his actual self and his uniqueness she perceived nothing but that he was the creator of her position, or, rather, the one who granted it to her. Therefore something of him was felt in the kind and degree of this love; nothing, indeed, of the genius or the hero, but his everyday presence, his action expressed — not in Austerlitz or the Code Civil — but, rather, in the smashing of chairs and the pinching of ear-lobes.

When a sentence of an English writer (which was coined about books) is applied to men — that they can scarcely make other people good or bad, only better or worse — one has expressed morally what is here said psychologically. Every person has his special medium, which best enables him to live in the world. Josephine's medium of this sort was not so much an amorous as a convivial, social one, which included the matters of love indispensable to her. If she was really to adapt or educate herself, she had only one sphere, which — doubtless because of its century-old origin in a race whose existence has always centred in a highly developed and refined herd-life — determined her nature just as the genius of the artist determines his. Here was the language she understood, and whoever spoke it belonged to that breed of men which



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focused her attention and aroused her interest. Something pleasantly and correctly said, with a nuance of manner which resolved almost into the physical and which could never be expressed in words — that was what lived and weighed and mattered for her. And only those who knew this language and for whom this manner had become native could talk to her, awaken her interests, and, indeed, even influence her to any degree. Thus she had taken Barras's well-turned mediocrities as teachings; thus she had been able to learn in the Panthémont and from Aunt Renaudin and even from Alexandre. And thus, also, she could learn nothing from Napoleon. For, as has been said, his simplicity was without charm — and his lessons did not have the tone which made her listen; where a correct turn might have convinced her, he commanded or shouted — and she took flight in tears, and in them remained obdurate, as this was still the most effective way — refusing to answer anything to which taste and feeling had not taught her a reply.

Along whatever roads the Revolution and her lack of money and of moral inhibitions may have led Josephine, the most inimical moralists will not deny that she walked them all with charm, and that she behaved with tact in the midst of the most doubtful situations, particularly after she had become really herself. It was reserved for her love of Napoleon to make her increasingly forgetful of bearing and grace and to let her fall after the attacks of distress into a callousness caused by over-excitement, in which, wearily fleeing from the unmanageable reality, she took refuge in many small diverting pastimes. Napoleon was rude, coarse, and loud; he could be great, but he had no dignity; he said deep things, but in a way incomprehensible to her — incomprehensible, as to her this entire love must have been, when there still had been questioning and understanding and not simply the panic of losing what she did not want to lose. Such, then, had Napoleon become to Josephine: her husband, her spouse, unintelligible, torturing, but still

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her property, bought with renunciation, which she wanted to have and keep. She was through with violence; she had surrendered, had tried to submit, and had made compliance to love; but with all this she had forgotten her own affectionate and touching language of love. Now she also shouted, made scenes, and raged in fury at the violent tempest with which she had to live; and while she still, with delicacy and a manner which had almost become mind, could delight great men and disarm hateful women, nevertheless she did, before the evening of her womanhood, forgetting all experiences, really fall in love with this last love; whether like a Corsican maid or not, just like the little Yeyette of long ago, who understood nothing of love but her own foolishly greedy desire and the superstitious fears whispered by the Negro women.

Thus was Josephine, and thus Napoleon in her sight; thus the armour of her soul, with which she was to wage the fight to keep the thing which she lived with so foolishly and so painfully. To fight for something, which she now spoke about so often, had really never been her task, and how was she to begin? First of all, against whom? Against Napoleon, perhaps, who, returning from his amours, always guarded them from her in an unkingly way, assuring her of his ever affectionate friendship and attachment? Or the Bonaparte family, for whose attacks she had long ago summoned all her cunning and wit? No, these were not the enemy. Her enemy was formless, bodiless. True, Pauline Borghese, Caroline Murat, and Elisa Bacciochi were of service to this enemy, and Josephine hated her sisters-in-law for it, hated them as one hates those who throw the snowballs which may let loose an avalanche, if the storm and snow be so formed. But in these skirmishes with the tossers of the snowball all her fight had its own course. Yet it was ever more difficult to foretell the weather of her fate, for the weather-maker was away more and more often, with his eternal wars and occupations. And the impulse of the ostrich, which looks up when any

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long lull in danger arrives, prevented her from seeing a threat of storm in his letters. At all events, it took her a long time to decipher the handwriting of these letters, and if she found nothing in their contents to give her cause for jealousy, she was consoled. When one person does not understand the way of life of another, the contents of his handwriting will certainly not teach anything. But when, meanwhile, the body of the threat took shape, Napoleon was over-careful not to divulge anything about it, although by so doing he betrayed himself.

When Napoleon became convinced that he was not the cause of the childlessness of their marriage, Josephine placed her greatest faith on the affectionate regard which Napoleon seemed to bear for Hortense's first-born (a situation which helped her to forget that she had become a grandmother instead of a mother). Josephine could not have suspected that this affection which touched her so much was due simply to the presence of a child, and not this special child — that it was only one expression of Napoleon's deep-seated family impulse, which causes the average man of Latin race, at the sight of a silent little being, to exclaim: "*Qu'il est mignon!*" or "*Guarda che bel bambino!*" Josephine therefore was struck in the midst of life when this little Napoleon, whom she already regarded as the imperial heir, died in the spring of 1807. She thereupon travelled immediately to her daughter, who was completely desperate. Napoleon's reply to her reports of Hortense's despair contained the hint that this particular child did not matter, but that *any* living male child mattered; and in addition there was something of his carefully guarded plans, which, with the disappearance of this grandchild, again began to encircle Josephine's problem. This problem, the product of his power, which among so many blood-sacrifices also drank his life-blood, again arose with renewed demands. It grew along with the ostensible growth of his power, and it seemed more important, after each victory and each gain,

to secure place in the future for the thing he had just acquired. Napoleon now approached his fortieth year. The fear of the creator gripped him that he should not know the heir to his image and being, which he believed established for all eternity — the fear that perhaps one of his brothers would become his successor. So within him there smouldered the sorrow of the descendant of a race which had always been rich in offspring, who sees children born to all the mediocrities of his tribe, and feels himself — the most powerful — the only one to be excluded. And the childless man with such patriarchal feelings is a spendthrift of the gifts of life; he does not provide for the future, and when his youth is gone, he becomes aware of his impoverishment and his exclusion from the future of the earth. Quick and clear and keen as Napoleon was in the solution of his other problems, the thought and desire encircling this particular one was disturbed, inhibited, and indecisive. He spoke to Talleyrand and Fouché, to Rœderer and others, about the now unavoidable and necessary separation; he let others talk to him about it — and assured Josephine of his inviolable affection. He secretly had a list made of all the marriageable princesses who could be taken into consideration — and spoke and acted as if all this had nothing to do with Josephine. Actually there appeared possible to him some hazy solution by which the most beautiful and high-born young woman would be vouchsafed to him as the bearer of his children, one who besides bringing him family happiness should possess an awe-inspiring name and afford a brilliant alliance — but with this young empress, Josephine must continue to be present, as she was present now and had been for so long. Meanwhile he commissioned one of his ministers to induce Josephine herself to propose the dissolution of this childless marriage; but when Josephine, dismayed at the demand of a magnanimity which was far from her thought, came to Napoleon with violently tearful outbursts as arguments, he recalled his authorization and even let himself be induced to write

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to Fouché — whom the mission had left as cold as its disavowal — asking him not to interfere in his affairs.

Amid such delays and attempts at decision, which were begun in bad conscience and never completed, those years passed by which constituted what the historians call Napoleon's greatest period. Trafalgar, the ill-advised continental blockade, Spain, and the "evil" victories in the east had already begun to shake his power and France's belief in him. And he had gone so far that the watchword under which he had begun his ascent now became the war-cry of his enemies: Liberty.

How Josephine spent her time until this year 1809, which gave Napoleon his last decisive victory, has been told in this as well as in the preceding chapter. The fight for her "happiness," of which she spoke so often, had been waged in tears, scenes, and reproaches, practically the same weapons with which earlier in her life she had tried to hold Alexandre Beauharnais. Over the many fluctuations of anxiety and obliviousness her restlessness continued to spread its glittering veil: over the sparkling trifles, the many, many people, over the joyous little flames which burned themselves out though they never once had kindled real joy. When her fear returned, she began lamenting once more and grew increasingly careless in the choice of her listeners. If at times a bodily discomfort overtook Josephine, she would, while still protesting her great love for Napoleon, and with the same conviction with which she had spoken of his incestuous relation with Pauline, say to anyone near her: Yes, it was quite possible that her existence had become a burden to her husband, and that he doubtless wanted to rid himself of her by the use of poison. Did she ever, having come so far, think to throw off this "happiness" by a gesture of pride or merely of wisdom? If she had cared *only* for the position, she would doubtless have decided on a renunciation, in the hope that it would not be accepted, but at least certain that she could have made the conditions and

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hence secure for herself the next place. But everything and anything mattered. Of the painful vacillations of mood at the end of this marriage, of Napoleon's somewhat intentional nervous crises, by which he expected to bring Josephine to voluntary separation, of Josephine's attempt to avoid, by the most gentle submissiveness, the smallest rancour in her husband's threatening tempest, and, finally, of the ugly vibrations in all this through the court circles and beyond them, a whole book could be written: a grotesque, horrible book, packed with the symptoms of the decomposition of two personalities and of the approaching dissolution of an enormous despotism. A more accurate record of all these happenings can add nothing more necessary to Josephine's life-history than the last phase of this long history of the separation.

On the 21st of October 1809 Napoleon wrote to Josephine from Munich: "My friend, I leave here in an hour. I shall arrive at Fontainebleau either the 26th or the 27th; you may go there in company with some ladies. — Napoleon."

The Emperor came from Vienna; he had made good the last battle of Aspern and Essling by the victory of Wagram and had resided for three months, until the conclusion of peace, at Schönbrunn. A young patriot had tried to kill him, and the thought that tomorrow perhaps another such attempt might succeed had again called forth the whole question of succession. Then, too, he had been very happy all this time with Maria Walewska — and although he insisted that this had nothing to do with Josephine, still the happy memory was within him when he sent this short note to Josephine and, urging on the postilion, set out on the journey. The speed of this trip through Germany, which no courier could overtake, and the fact that he announced his departure only at the last moment, seem to confirm the oft repeated conjecture that immediately, from the very beginning, he desired to put Josephine in the wrong, the trick of a bad conscience. For Josephine *could* not

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have been at Fontainebleau in time, where on the morning of the 26th he had already arrived. And when the ministers who had been summoned replied to his questions concerning the rumours current after Aspern by saying that the restlessness in the nation was in this case due to the uncertainty of the succession, they immediately struck the desired tone — and then, above everything else, there was Fouché's remark: that there was not one among the marshals who did not, like the captains of the great Alexander, already dream of his own empire. This time Napoleon had really made his decision. He had been long enough away from Josephine to be sure of his feelings. Also politically it appeared to him that the time was ripe. For the unfortunate Spanish undertaking and the lost battle of Aspern gave warning enough that further failures would considerably depreciate his desirability as son-in-law to a reigning prince. And now when, by the Peace of Vienna, he felt himself, for the time being, secure in his still unshaken power, he thought the hour at hand for a new, fertile marriage, a marriage which must, besides the hope of an heir, bring him the necessary alliance with a great power.

That this new marriage must be preceded by a divorce he could no longer conceal from himself. He had already, without devoting much time to this burdensome thought, applied to the Tsar for his sister and had received excuses as well as the condition of a free hand in Poland — and during all this delay the Dowager Tsarina had hurriedly married off the daughter suitable to his age. So now Napoleon wanted to take the lawful road, which had to begin with the great annoyance. And he began in such an embarrassed and inefficient way that he really made a wretchedly unpleasant affair out of a thing which, although a painful necessity, he should have placed outside all discussion. Instead of an immediate unequivocal statement there was at first sulking rancour with Josephine, who had presumably arrived too late (a rancour probably artificially fed

by resentment over her late arrivals in Italy and Paris), crude avoidance of her at court functions, so that the whisper of divorce suddenly became a loud clamour, and many cloaks were hung to catch the new wind. With this, and with the discovery meanwhile that Napoleon had in all secrecy had the door joining their bedrooms walled up, Josephine began this sojourn in the château of Fontainebleau, through whose trellised gate she had in times gone by seen Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette return from the hunt.

Fontainebleau was for Josephine a place of as decidedly little pleasure as for Napoleon. Here she had atoned for the short joy of her first freedom after the separation from Alexandre; first by the nursing of the sick, which wore her out, and then by those exigencies which have ever remained secret and from which she fled so hurriedly to Martinique — to her mother, who now had died, as had also the old Marquis and Aunt Renaudin. Everything was at present more festive than during the reign of the last King. Great hunts took place, many coaches followed Josephine's carriage through the wonderful forest, but there was no joy in all this. Napoleon himself said in astonishment over the household at Fontainebleau that he did not understand why there was so little pleasure where so much money was spent. Many people stood, day in and day out, at the trellised gate, and when Josephine appeared, she was greeted differently than ever before, more sincerely, more ardently, more touchingly. For at that time this small place, which had, as in centuries before, become the antechamber of the court, knew what was happening — and even then the sentimental Josephine legend surrounded the Empress. The old soldiers had forgotten all the talk about her in the first Italian campaign and remembered only that they had seen her in Milan. When the rumour now reached them, they said, shaking their heads, that the Emperor had "better not send the old lady away," she brought him luck. And after the sad return to Paris, during which Napoleon did not



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ride in Josephine's carriage, there began among the lesser people of the court who had been there from the first the same pitying whispers as were heard among the soldiers. For they *knew* Josephine, with all her merits and faults, with all her kindness, which had done service to so many, and they knew that she also knew her people. Thus, before the decision was final, there was heard, along with the malicious joy arising in certain quarters, a far more sincere, although somewhat selfish pity.

Those days in Paris were the worst. The Emperor avoided Josephine wherever he could. At meals not a word was spoken except when Napoleon broke the unbearable silence by addressing a question on the weather to the major-domo. Josephine's eyes were red from weeping, she was scarcely able to drag herself to the table, she sat tired and resigned, eating hardly anything, gulping down sobs as they came, and when the horrible meal was over, rose with the attitude of one dangerously ill. Again and again Napoleon tried to persuade her to a voluntary separation, but she always refused, saying it was not because she cared for the throne, but because she could not renounce him, her beloved husband. And when she had worked herself up into a pathetic state and again melted away in tears, the Emperor would tell her that she should not try to touch his heart, for he still loved her, that politics had no heart, merely a head. He offered her five millions a year and a domain whose capital would be Rome (the Rome of the Pope who had anointed him and who was now his prisoner). But Josephine refused to surrender so long as she was not forced to it. And still the request for divorce was not put in such a way as to allow no objection. He still sought causes for irritation and punitive ill humour.

Finally an excellent aid to Napoleon's uncertainty offered itself. Again and again the Emperor had forbidden access to Josephine's rooms to dealers of all sorts and had had those who were caught removed. This same order applied to magicians, fortune-tellers, and

the like, from whom now, more than ever, Josephine hoped to obtain comforting prophecies. Just at this time she was told of a new magician who was a wonder; and when she longingly mentioned this German, whose name was Hermann, to Napoleon, the Emperor had inquiries made about the man, with the result that a strict order was given to Josephine not to receive him. When one day rainy weather had interrupted a scheduled hunt, Napoleon returned unexpectedly to Paris and quietly arrived at the Tuileries, after a command sent ahead to the guard not to call to arms. Being suspicious, he hurried to the rooms of the Empress, where he found, besides one of the forbidden tradeswomen, this fortune-teller Hermann, who was a spy in the service of the English, sent to sound out the Empress. Josephine, caught, ruined her position entirely by saying that Madame Letizia had sent her the tradeswoman, and that the soothsayer had simply been brought along. Her pleading little note to her mother-in-law was useless, for when Letizia gathered from Napoleon's questions that Josephine had been caught in an action threatening the State, she, scenting the issue, quickly gave away her unloved daughter-in-law. Thus Napoleon had a substantial motive for anger. And this time he did not allow the wrath which strengthened his decision to pass by unused.

Josephine spent a few sad, rainy November days in Malmaison. Here, as in Paris, she talked incessantly of the divorce, told the ladies-in-waiting, the physicians, those who sought audience, and even the servants, with rich comments, the expressions of the Emperor and his conduct; she accused, lamented, but found no alleviation of anxiety in all this. She gradually understood that everything was at an end, but still she did not want this to be true; she fought against it with "But yet" and "If only" and became hopeless and miserable. She returned to Paris. Hortense was with her — Hortense, whom Napoleon had in vain tried to induce to influence her mother in favour of the separation. And although Hortense her-

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self, bitterly unhappy over her own marital relationship, was resolutely in favour of the dissolution of all unhappy marriages, she nevertheless had refused Napoleon's mission. Yet she was now of as little comfort to Josephine as the others, who, in view of the inevitability of the divorce, could only advise her as to her conduct. With the fifth anniversary of the coronation and the fourth anniversary of Austerlitz, there began the one really difficult round of festivities in Josephine's life. Paris was full of royal guests; and she was forced to receive charmingly and preside before people who already knew how matters stood with her. For these festivities were preceded by the evening on which Napoleon made use of his artificially nurtured malice to put an end to the sad medley of ambition, renamed politics, and to the bad conscience of the husband, and to say the decisive word.

When after dinner on the night of the 30th of November the Emperor and Empress were alone over their coffee, the discussion began. That Napoleon was highly excited was easily apparent, but as the few eyewitnesses were far removed, their report of the scene seems too uncertain to make its repetition worth while. It is certain, however, that Josephine suddenly cried out, slid to the floor, and remained immobile, that Napoleon called the prefect of the château, Bausset, and bade him carry Josephine up the secret stairway to her chambers. Napoleon himself carried the candlestick, while the stout prefect tried to hoist Josephine up the stairs, she meanwhile whispering to him, inaudibly to Napoleon, that she was being squeezed too much. Only with the assistance of Napoleon himself was the shamming Josephine finally brought to her bedroom. There she was left in the care of Hortense and the physician-in-ordinary, Corvisart; this latter was well enough acquainted with the fainting spells of the Empress to be able soon to reassure Napoleon. With all Josephine's swooning and tears, it must not be forgotten that feeling also is expressed in accordance with fashion, and that of course

the extremely fashionable Josephine would not fail to meet a difficult situation with the correct *ton* — as she herself admitted in the letter quoted shortly before her marriage.

After Napoleon finally managed to cut the Gordian knot with such a dull sword, he proceeded to the new marriage in great haste. Eugène was summoned (the Emperor had resolved to adopt him); the points of law and the formal questions were dealt with summarily rather than thoughtfully. While this was going on, Josephine had a doubly hard time of it, for Napoleon, now that he had nothing to lose, gave way freely to his feeling for her and again and again assured her touchingly of his loving regard. The fact that already numerous ladies of the court remained seated and did not interrupt their conversation at her approach he, who usually thought so much of etiquette, did not notice. Nor did he release Josephine until the last day from the now bitter duties of the court functions and receptions. And while Pauline had even celebrated Josephine's overthrow with a great feast, and Josephine had played the Empress — only as if in borrowed clothes — before all the kings and princes, it was not easy to bear in Napoleon a suddenly discovered posthumous jealousy. (This grudge he bore the "cast-off" was for the conspicuous attentions paid her, some time before, by the young Duke of Mecklenberg.)

The 15th of December was set as the day of the miserable ceremony, with all the available members of the family and all court dignitaries assembled in gala dress. Josephine had received a long speech to be learned by heart. This she did not take the trouble to do; she simply read it, or, rather, a part of it, for then she tearfully handed the manuscript to the Minister of the Imperial Household, for him to finish.

Napoleon's funeral oration on his marriage ran as follows: "God knows what this decision has cost my heart. But there is no sacrifice which is greater than my courage when it is proved necessary to the

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welfare of France. I feel urged to add: not only have I never had occasion to complain, but I must, on the contrary, praise the attachment and affection of my beloved wife; she has enhanced fifteen years of my life; the memory of it will ever be graven in my heart. She has been crowned by my hand; I desire that she keep the rank and title of crowned Empress, but before everything else that she never doubt my affection, and that she always regard me as her best and dearest friend.”

The speech dictated to Josephine, which she changed somewhat and which finally the minister read for her, ran: “ With the consent of our great and dear husband, I must explain: as I have no hope whatsoever of bearing children, which would satisfy the demands of politics and the interests of France, I give him willingly the greatest proof of affection and devotion which has ever been given on earth. Everything I have comes from his goodness; his hand has crowned me, and on the height of this throne I have experienced nothing but proofs of the love and affection of the French people. I wish to give acknowledgment to these feelings by consenting to the dissolution of a marriage inimical to the welfare of France, whose continuance robs the nation of the happiness of some day being ruled by the descendants of the great man who so obviously has been called by Providence to erase the evils of a terrible revolution and again to set up the altar, the throne, and social order. But the dissolution of my marriage will change nothing of the feeling of my heart; the Emperor will always have in me his best friend. I know what pain this act, dictated by politics, has caused his heart, but the sacrifice we make for the welfare of our country redounds to his glory as well as to mine.”

With this, Josephine’s participation in Napoleon’s requirements for the pompous execution of private matters was ended. The fact that he expressed his satisfaction at the grandiose, pathetic success by having a picture painted of it affected her as little as did the suc-

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cessive scenes of her official dismissal from the marriage. The ever available senate allowed itself to be turned into a court of justice, in which — the Code Napoléon being totally left out of consideration — the civil marriage was dissolved, Eugène, this time, supplying the sentimental element by a speech. And, lacking the Pope, who, because of Napoleon, could not officiate, the French clergy was willing to annul the religious contract, on grounds of an alleged technical error.

A few weeks before, Josephine had told the Duchesse d'Abrantès at Malmaison that the divorce would kill her. But now this long torture was finally at an end, and — still there was life; beneath all the weariness, there still were desires and hopes; and through the miserable sadness of this departure from the Tuileries, with the tears and the little sighs, there came whispers of the hundred pastimes awaiting her which still were life.



## CHAPTER SEVEN



# NEVER AN END

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,  
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire:  
For life is sweet, but after life is death.  
This is the end of every man's desire.

*Swinburne*

It was on the morning of December 16, 1809 that Josephine climbed into "the executioner's cart" which was to take her from the Tuileries. The coach thus named by her was followed by several other carriages, and this exodus of the Empress, in spite of the liveries and the stage-coaches loaded with all their gaudy stuff — above everything, the little menagerie and the pack of dogs — must have had somewhat the appearance of a procession of mountebanks. The destination was Malmaison, which was Josephine's own special house, the centre throughout the years around which all the coming and going had revolved. Just as at the time when she had acquired it, when not only the purchase-price but even the obligatory taxes had been lacking, everything went according to Josephine's disposition, so again things remained exactly the same at Malmaison: endless building and rebuilding, hosts of guests and workmen arriving and departing, life continuing constantly in a state of restlessness. To Malmaison she now went in the pouring rain of that dreary winter's day, laying down the burden which had become the whole purport of life.

Desolation and emptiness surrounded her in those days; her

weeping, which too long had been only a means to an end, continued rather automatically when the visitors before whom the tears had flowed so dutifully had left. And although faint desires, a little curiosity, and some playful thoughts came to her again, these messengers of life were like ghosts in days from which the blood had been drained. Who would ask now about love or the lack of it? However things may have gone, there were fifteen years of life which had now come to an end. And little as her consciousness was aware of the fact that she soon would be forty-seven years old, those years were still in her mind, stored up and carried along in every organ of her being. And although she had not at all wished for abdication and retirement, the weariness of being so long harassed had been appeased through the promise of security in the duration of the married state and her position as Empress. Now from the very foundation of life it shot forth groaning. Everything was so perplexing, so senseless, so flat, like a room after long play or long struggle, when the sullen partner has gone. It was difficult for her in those first days — more difficult still because the change in her accustomed manner of life was now carried out in a way that allowed her to become completely absorbed in the contemplation of her own misery and loneliness. The small household establishment was at the beginning too evident; no news was brought, there was no temptation even to weep, and visitors were scarce in those early days. The wives of a few dignitaries called, in obedience to their hearts. But the huge throng that belonged more or less to the holding of court — and every man and woman in it had at times used Josephine in matters either small or great — did not yet quite know how the wind was blowing and preferred to wait until the Emperor again showed himself.

After Josephine's departure Napoleon had withdrawn to the Trianon, where there were no memories of her. "He spent three days there, saw no one, not even his ministers; and during the en-



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tire duration of his rule those three days were probably the only ones in which his emotions had greater power over him than had affairs of state. Everything was suspended, his correspondence, his audiences, and the sessions of the council. The only thing for which he made any arrangement was the regulation pertaining to the new method of living for the woman from whom he had just separated, and he informed me even of this through one of his officers," wrote Mollien, his minister. All too often Napoleon imparted to Josephine that he had taken leave of the great love of his youth with so much difficulty. He wrote her emotional letters full of tenderness and longing and finally invited her and Hortense for dinner to the Trianon, during which time they "both looked so happy and content that one would never have thought they had parted from each other." This inability to bear up alone under what Napoleon, after all, had himself desired, this yielding to the melancholy of a love that was over (which he had believed free from danger), as well as to "his eternal weakness for Josephine," had for some time a painful effect on the woman at Malmaison whom he had forsaken: the same effect which a glass of cognac may have upon a person to whom it is given occasionally out of pity and who has reconciled himself to abstaining from drink.

But finally lights again began to glitter through the fog, wider vistas opened up. And when Napoleon upon his return to Paris stated very distinctly that visits with Josephine were desired by him, and when carriages from Paris drove up unceasingly, to the outbursts of tears which each visitor received according to his importance there was added a curiosity already much more lively and renewed interest in life. The first strong expression of this was her desire to be able as quickly as possible to move into the Parisian domicile which had been assigned to her — the *Élysée* Palace. The Murats meanwhile were living there and giving banquet after banquet. Then there soon appeared again, as far more forceful mes-

sengers of life, the familiar old companions — financial worries. Not that Josephine had any reason to complain of the maintenance allotted to her: the two million francs paid her by the State were later increased to three, and the Emperor added from his civil list an annual sum of another million. When the first pain of the separation began to lessen, she hinted in her letters about the difficulties she was having over her income, and Napoleon immediately presented her with six hundred thousand francs; these were kept in some of the drawers at Malmaison, and soon afterwards another two hundred thousand francs were added. But uncontrolled debts came to light concerning which Josephine had kept silent at the final settlement, as she had done on previous occasions; and at the very beginning her rather small financial balance was upset by the prospect of many fresh purchases made possible by her new circumstances. The tradespeople and milliners no longer feared the journey to Malmaison, and when at last, in January 1810, Josephine was able to take possession of the Élysée Palace, life again teemed with every sort of temptation to buy. The long prohibition served for a time as a spice, so that Josephine grasped unreservedly at everything which was offered, and then ever more quickly let what she had purchased lie or threw it away.

But this forced buying, which had already become almost dull, was not able to lessen her disappointment over the faint echo accompanying her entrance into the Élysée Palace. Everybody knew that the Emperor had not parted from Josephine to remain alone. Various rumours and conversation full of the importance with which the coming of a new mistress was associated spread from one to another. Changed orders relative to Josephine had not yet been given; the command issued a short time before to publish nothing in the newspapers concerning what Josephine did or did not do strengthened all the cautious profiteers of the Empire in their conviction that, in view of the early arrival of a new Empress, Jo-

sephine's stay in Paris would not be desired; and that it would therefore be better not to enter into any form of contract which might soon be looked upon with disapproval. Thus most of the visitors at the Élysée Palace were people from the anti-imperial clique of the faubourg Saint-Germain, who by their widely heralded visits to "the unhappy victim of the tyrant" sought to express their protests against Napoleon. Josephine nevertheless enjoyed this sympathy very greatly and was not sparing with personal reminiscences, which needed no distortion of facts to travel triumphantly from her drawing-room to the Comte d'Artois and other Bourbons, "as material against the frightful Bonaparte." But these fifteen or twenty visitors a day could not satisfy Josephine that she was looked upon as the social centre which she considered herself to be. When she heard that the Emperor was beginning to enjoy himself as much as "*l'inamusable*" was capable of, she grasped the next occasion offered which promised to give her new importance. While little informed as to the negotiations already pending, she determined to take a hand herself in the marriage of the Emperor, which was now inevitable; by so doing she hoped not only to win the gratitude of Napoleon, but also to secure for herself some kind of protectorate over her successor and thus to take away the poisonous sting from what was bound to happen; in former times she had occasionally anticipated her own attacks of jealousy by presenting to her husband one of her ladies-in-waiting for those brief hours of love which could scarcely even be called adventures. Her own efforts, as well as those of Hortense, regarding the Countess Metternich, who was to guide "the Austrian marriage" along its course, had, with all their show of magnanimity, about as much practical effect as the energetic and excited striking of a fan has against a tree which is just about to be felled by skilled woodsmen.

Scarcely three months after the divorce — on the 11th of March 1810 — Marshal Berthier, who had been sent as Napoleon's rep-

representative to Vienna, concluded the marriage contract with the Archduchess Marie-Louise, then just eighteen years of age; she was the god-child of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI. Three days later the new Empress of the French was on her way to Paris. Often as Napoleon had declared that he could see in his second wife only the future mother of his heir, yet he now viewed the marriage in quite a different light when he thought of the lovely girl as his wife; the all-consuming wish, inborn in him, for marriage as the only right form of love and life again exerted its great power over him. At that time Napoleon's sister-in-law Katharina von Württemberg wrote to her father that the Emperor was already in love with his future wife and that this marriage had gone to his head in quite an inconceivable manner, that he had called in both tailor and shoemaker in order to be dressed with the greatest care, and that he had even learned how to waltz. And all this in his forty-first year, after having, during the whole time he was Emperor, neglected his attire on many occasions even to the point of the ridiculous! If the fact is added (which a few years later offered Marie-Louise such welcomed justification for her adultery<sup>1</sup>) that Napoleon, forgetting all formalities in his greedy impatience, simply took possession of the young girl on the first night after they had met in Compiègne, before either blessing or marriage ceremony had made their nuptial bed legal, it is easy to imagine how much sentiment Napoleon really felt for this marriage contracted solely for reasons of state. Certainly it in no way diminished the friendliness and affection which he again and again assured Josephine belonged to her; except that in those weeks, quite unawares, the feeling was removed to another place in life. And with the daily increasing importance which Marie-Louise's imminent position assumed for him, Napoleon's guilty conscience also grew, as well as his uncertainty about Josephine,

<sup>1</sup> In addition, Napoleon had been excommunicated and therefore had no right to receive the marriage sacrament.

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whom he first actually deserted in those days. After the longing letters, so disconcerting, which he had written her only two months before, Josephine was suddenly much too near for him at Malmaison. He wanted to have her farther away from Paris; most of all, he wished he might have her for a time completely outside the country. But the hopelessness of any attempt to remove Josephine from France without using force was obvious. So he meanwhile assigned another abode to her: the castle and domain of Navarre, a very important estate, which was transferred to her for her own. Napoleon requested that Josephine should go there before the arrival of Marie-Louise, for the sake of propriety; under this propriety consideration for the feelings of the bride was understood, and besides he may have feared some terrible scene on the part of Josephine.

Three days after the time appointed for her departure to Navarre, Josephine was still in Malmaison hoping anxiously — and with feelings of both jealousy and curiosity — to be supplied with news concerning the new Empress before she left. She must have received an imperial command, however, for she finally departed from Malmaison on the very night when in Compiègne Napoleon showed so little understanding for the sensibilities of a Habsburg archduchess. The command was probably so imperative that she could delay no longer. Her removal just at this time seemed very cruel to her. And Navarre, for all its rich baroque immensity, had long been uninhabited, and provided no comforts whatever; the chill March air crept through all the poorly fastened doors and windows. But the thing which turned this piece of foreign soil into complete exile for her was that the majority of those who made up her household had remained in Paris — whether it was to view the festivities and Marie-Louise, who went to the altar in Josephine's mantle and crown, or in order to be present at such an opportune time and to lose no chance of favour with the new Empress. Josephine very soon

wrote that Navarre did not agree with her — but what place on earth could at that time have agreed with her, when vinegar and gall offered the only cordial in life's dreariness, in those days when she felt physically how another and a younger one was taking possession of her life, was walking through her Tuileries and being courted by her people?

As Napoleon intended to pass the first month of his marriage in Compiègne, where he had "criminally" embraced Marie-Louise for the first time, and expected to journey with her to Belgium after that, Josephine was permitted to return to Malmaison, especially since she had promised to go directly from there to a watering-place. Her letter, in which there is also a request for money (in addition to touching the wrong string by addressing him with the title "Majesty") speaks about Josephine's *sacrifice* — that word which, from now on, neither she herself nor any of the Beauharnais followers could dispense with: ". . . But although I shall be in Malmaison, Your Majesty, you may be assured that I shall conduct myself there as if I were a thousand miles from Paris. I have made a great sacrifice, Sire, and every day I feel more and more the immensity of it. Meanwhile this sacrifice will remain as it should be; it will be entirely my own. Your Majesty will not be disturbed in your happiness by an expression of complaints from me. . . ."

But the result of these promises, so painfully and solemnly given, was after a while exactly like a great number of Josephine's other promises to Napoleon. Intentionally she disturbed him as little as she consciously had gone contrary to his wishes in many matters. But she was there, made her presence felt, held her sacrifice to view, and gave so strong an impression of every hour in her life being full of this self-abnegating love for Napoleon that he was always forced to defend himself before the world if he intimated to her that she should stay away from Paris for a while.

Marie-Louise, a creature of little intelligence and without any

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sweetness of heart, by nature stingy and unable to free herself of the prejudices nurtured within her at the court of Vienna against this world of upstarts, had — except for Napoleon's very impersonal conjugal love, so ready-prepared — understood very slightly how to stir his affections. And this adverse opinion of her was quickly carried beyond the Tuileries by the rumours of the court, till soon there again sprang up the name which Marie-Antoinette had borne: *l'Autrichienne*. There was the appeal of blood-relationship in the legend of Josephine *la Française* — and it was indeed the strongest factor in that legend, which now began to grow so luxuriantly; and that Josephine was so very French (just like most of those are who have been born on the outer edge of national civilization) gave it more expression than if she had been one of those who had grown up in the midst of a cultural circle.

Josephine now was insatiable of listening to all the reports favourable to herself and of inviting everything which related to how little the new Empress was making herself at home in Paris. If she even heard that Marie-Louise was jealous of her, the foolish hope at once arose that some day the love of the French people for her (which she believed to be the increasing resentment of France against the Empire), as well as the unpopularity of the second wife, would bring Napoleon to his senses; this she interpreted as her own triumphal reinstallation on her throne. Napoleon's solicitude for her, and the cordiality of their occasional meetings, for some time strengthened her dreams of regaining her position, until the bitter news arrived that Marie-Louise was pregnant and thus had gained the ascendancy over her.

But gradually the great excitement subsided and things began to adjust themselves to the old, yet ever new game of life. Navarre, to which Josephine was ordered to return, had in the mean time been made livable through enormous expenditures, until finally it was almost endurable to her. She was assured of her "little establish-

ment ” there: fourteen ladies and twelve gentlemen, not including the priest, who was an archbishop. Soon a manner of life which differed but little from that of former years became the routine; a small innovation, besides the greedy expectancy of gossip concerning Marie-Louise, was Josephine’s passion for the game of patience, which often occupied many hours of her day. Madame de Rémusat gives a summary of how the days were spent at Navarre: “ Time passes here in a peculiar way; we are always together, we do nothing special, we do not talk very much, yet we are never bored. The same hours bring along with them the same occupations, until finally we no longer know whether it is yesterday or today.”

On the 20th of March 1811 Marie-Louise gave birth to the son who even before his procreation had had the rank and title of King of Rome bestowed upon him. Josephine accepted the event “ *de bonne grace*,” bountifully rewarded the messenger who brought the news, congratulated Napoleon effusively, and in reply had the following letter: “ My friend, I have received your note and thank you for it. My son is big and healthy. He has my chest, my mouth, and my eyes. I hope that he will fulfil his destiny. . . .”

Josephine made use of this event to give a feast to the residents of Évreux, the neighbouring city of her estate, and during this feast so much homage was paid to her generosity that she was almost enabled to forget that this child was not her own, and that it had deprived Eugène of his claim upon the Kingdom of Italy.

It was in this last brilliant year of the Empire that Josephine was banished to Navarre, where a real establishment had now been set up. According to her usual habits, Josephine spent her allotted three million and still more money in addition; she had all the people of rank and position who were travelling through Normandy as her guests, and other visitors besides. Hence this exile differed very little from her previous life during the years when Napoleon was absent. Scar tissue had grown around that thorn in her flesh Marie-



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Louise; and Josephine had to press very hard and deep to find again, when a visitor called, anything of the former tearful and disconsolate state. Her previous daily food for sorrow — the news from Paris — had long become an accustomed diurnal ingredient as painless as the occasional whining and lamenting over her lost happiness when every momentary discomfort, no matter what its source, was cause for moans and groans.

Hortense, who, with Napoleon's consent, was now divorced from the husband she had never loved, had, by the dropping of the wretched word "Holland," become simply Queen Hortense; she had her position at court and kept on guard. She was the best reporter her mother had, and a faithful intercessor with Napoleon. What vexed Josephine the most about all this circumstance, which sometimes oppressed her and at other times led to temporary outbursts of despair, was really the distance from Paris — where everything one learned was newer; where life flowed straight from its source; where there was still left a little power, a little money, a little joy in every new fashion; taken all together, a feeling of belonging to the world could always be found there.

It was not until September 1811 that Josephine was allowed to return to Malmaison. The many months of her sojourn that followed were for the time a real fulfilment of her wishes, and a compensation for Navarre, which because of its being so far from Paris had turned quickly into a sad and miserable place of exile for her. Of course her wish to build the tremendous new château at Malmaison which she had planned was never accomplished. But at least she had some parts rebuilt and others added; she bought more land and saw to it in every possible way that not one pleasure was denied her in her grief and loneliness. Her much boasted cult of the Emperor now consisted solely in keeping his work-room exactly the way he had left it. All together, things were carried on in a strange manner, so far as Napoleon was concerned, in this château of the Em-

press; not only in the fact that her entire household was now made up of adherents of the old society, but that the most welcomed of Josephine's guests came from the old aristocratic faubourg. And the ladies- and lords-in-waiting who as begging emigrants of former times had through Josephine's intercession been allowed to return and who had secured for themselves and their followers the most lucrative posts in the Empire now vied with the men and women from the faubourg Saint-Germain in their royalist remarks and anecdotes, full of undisguised malice toward the Emperor and his rule. Josephine not only listened kindly, but was flattered by all this; she displayed her own grief in connexion with it, so that Napoleon was placed in a worse light than ever. Yet it would be a mistake if anyone were inclined to interpret Josephine's patronage of the royalists, her choosing of friends among them, and her payment of pensions to impoverished aristocrats as any really sincere resentment against Napoleon or the actual awakening of a political sentiment such as formerly was displayed. Josephine's cultivation of this whole society, which exploited her and looked upon her generosity as an evident duty, was simply the expression of a completely indiscriminating admiration for the class — a feeling which had remained alive in her since the years when she had merely vegetated on the edge of this society. Her own rise had been as unable to change it as all the bitter experiences she had had with her own protégés: as, for instance, the Countess of La Rochefoucauld, who resigned from her position immediately after the divorce because she hoped to obtain the same place with Marie-Louise; or Polignac, whose life Josephine helped save and who afterwards, when he returned to France, did not even deem it necessary to pay her a visit of gratitude. Every social instinct deserted Josephine in her associations with members of this class; the ideas of an ignorant young girl — who had never profited through any experience — about a *grand seigneur* or *grande dame* made her tolerant even to the point

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of weak-mindedness; it seemed always as if she hoped to win the reward of "not being regarded as a protectress, but as one of them." Madame de Rémusat (in praise of whom it was afterwards said in Josephine's company that she was one of the first to distribute the white cockade of the Bourbons) has told (as have many others) of this blind weakness of Josephine's — and profited by it as well. In the year 1812, which brought to a climax the symptomatic conspiracy of Malet, the drawing-room enemies of the Emperor carried out their plans ever more openly. This had much greater influence on Josephine's weakness for them, because Napoleon was not present to dictate and correct; although it must be said of him in this connexion that Josephine's only sway over him seemed to have consisted in his taking from her something of the idolatry she always showed for the descendants of old families.

The only good Bonapartist in Malmaison was Hortense. She had retained something of her girlish enthusiasm for Napoleon, and had sense enough to see his great qualities, which were already growing petty or else bordering on mania. She had her children with her at her mother's home; and her youngest son, who was then called *Oui-Oui*, at that time lived through the experience of Malmaison, which he as second Emperor of the French was accustomed to describe to his son, *Loulou*.

While legend surrounds these months in Malmaison — already lying under the shadow of the Russian campaign — as the time of Josephine's quiet melancholy, with the scent of the *Souvenir de la Malmaison* enveloping her, the actual accounts cannot tell enough about the festive details of "this great season of Malmaison." It may be specially mentioned as a new note at this time, in contrast to her custom in the Tuileries, that Josephine placed great value on the preparation and arrangement of the meals; this was all added attraction for her visitors. No longer diverted by matrimonial problems nor even led astray by any lack of self-control, Josephine was

now enabled to develop her social gifts to the fullest extent and to devote so much time and effort to the thousand and one matters of small significance that there was none left for the larger ones — which would doubtless have been awkward and disturbing anyway. She was now the highly praised and accomplished lady of a château — and no woman of the Bourbons or Habsburgs could have approached any nearer to this strange ideal, which consisted in systematizing pleasure as a round of duty, and still acting as if there were no duties at all. On the whole, this wife of “ the soldier-Emperor ” who had risen out of the Revolution has scarcely an equal, even among women born to a throne, in the manner in which she carried off the art of social illusion: in acting as if the people whom one met were all delightful and honourable, as if one’s own real or possible contacts were the whole world, and as if there were never any “ ugly ” or “ sad ” things. But — as we today must think — is such a high sense of perfection not attained by a manner of life already rather worn out and characteristic of the intervals, the transition periods? Is it not again finely developed today among the wives of industrialists and bankers, with all its illusion and its turning away from the ugly and practical, which, however, is the basis of existence? Did not Josephine think of the “ business ” of her husband, becoming, as it did, world-history, as these women of today and of all other periods think of the powerful money-making activities of their husbands? So for our time, which in all its misery is so frightfully infatuated with the spirit of the age, one other small comment may be added, in an attempt to show those who wish to keep in direct relationship with the present (does not indeed all experienced life necessarily refer to the present?) the career of Josephine from still another view-point.

Into the melancholy farewell of the historical aspect of those phases of life which will never return, this natural lesson forces itself, that in the continual changing of mankind in its dance of

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life almost everything is preserved from yesterday and the day before yesterday, as if there were no succession in the scheme, but only a coexistent arrangement; as if the thing that yesterday held the centre of the stage were today pushed into a side-room, where it continues to remain until suddenly it may again become the centre of life. Concerning Josephine and all polished women through the ages it may doubtless be said that each successful ruler of those who have risen to a higher station pampers some real or imagined *ancien régime* and seeks to make its charms of service to itself; especially when they are revealed with the irrational matter-of-course attitude of refined women who preserve and transmit epochs, against the reasonable efforts of those who seek to climb. Therefore in America or anywhere else legends may today arise concerning women who knew how to set up their illusional realities against the "ugly" actualities of the surrounding world. And there is scarcely any doubt that, so far as great men are likely to arise in this new order, which still appears so inconceivable, the wives of such leaders will probably be modified Josephines, such qualifications being, after all, a part of the aggregate of a "great" woman.

Josephine, therefore, during these months at Malmaison had the table laid for about thirty covers at each meal, and besides the upper servants there was a lackey for each guest. It was a fashionable boast which flattered her considerably that, at this time of Napoleon's continental blockade, she was able to secure for her table foreign and even English delicacies. Each morning the flow of guests was preceded by the more modest, yet more expensive arrival of many tradesmen, milliners, and the like, who no longer needed to fear the Emperor. Besides the irresistible temptation of their goods, those among them who were better acquainted with Josephine had things to tell her which gave a still greater zest to the buying: for instance, that Marie-Louise was a poor customer,

had no taste, always wanted to buy things cheap, like a plebeian, and asked for her bill every week. If Josephine had been at all conscious of her age, she would have forgotten it in this offering of fashionable splendours to eternal youth. She bought and ordered. No muslin was too sheer for her, no hat too girlish; no *décolletage* made her aware that her once famous bosom had become enormous, and her waist-line far too large. But this buying was like the desire for drink; it enlivened her, drove away the annoyance over her ever more difficult and long morning toilet, so that when finally the last of the tradesmen had gone, she was again a happy, ageless woman who in the "chiffons" which enveloped her had a pleasant share in that period when fashion was no less an element than the thing which so grandly calls itself history. Napoleon's warning, which was caused by her extravagances, that she should lay aside a million a year, so that she then in ten years would have ten millions for her grandchildren, might with her impulsive feelings have been placed under the chapter-heading: "He never understood me." The practical result of this admonition amounted to as little as the sending of Mollien, the Minister of Finance, who was to manage her financial affairs; he fared no better in the presence of Josephine's long-practised tearful outbursts than Napoleon had done through all the years before.

For a long time Josephine had hoped that Napoleon would carry out his desire of bringing her and Marie-Louise together. But Marie-Louise also had her tearful times; hence Josephine was compelled to be resigned. But she at least wished to see the child and urged this upon the Emperor in their rare meetings and in her letters. So, owing to his pride as a father and to the feeling that Josephine had a right to it, he consented. The little château Bagatelle, in the Bois de Boulogne, was chosen as the meeting-place, and Napoleon (who still rode as poorly as he had through all the preceding years) accompanied on horseback the carriage in which a

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grand lady of the old régime, now governess to the *enfant de France*, held the little King of Rome on her knees. Josephine was greatly excited and with tears flooding her eyes fondled the frail blue-eyed child for a long time. When she next looked up, something in her excited manner must have betrayed the evidence of an approaching outburst, for Napoleon hurriedly put the child back into the carriage and took leave of her. Soon afterwards he left for Russia, and this short meeting was the very last between them.

Josephine was but little concerned over the rumours which soon arrived in France relative to this fateful campaign — such a chimera it was — and which fitted very badly into the guarded news from Spain. In all the years of her married life she had never allowed the hundreds of thousands of deaths and the endless suffering which came into the world through Napoleon to disturb in the least her enjoyment of this “business” of his; for she certainly did not care about mankind being converted into history unless it concerned her coronation or dealt with the “rightful” kings of France. Hence the first news coming from Russia which really did affect her was the request of her son, Eugène, that she should go to Milan to be present at the confinement of his wife. She cared less and less about foreign travel. The small castle Pregny, which she had so rashly bought, the year after the divorce, during her journey to Switzerland, suddenly occurred to her. On her return why not stay there for a while? She could not refuse Eugène’s request. So in the summer she set out for Milan — and there is nothing to show that the enthusiastic greeting of the Milanese, so filled with recollections, awakened any memories in her. She remained for as short a time as the sense of propriety allowed, and then went to Aix in Savoy. For even at that time it had already become the height of fashion to spend the midsummer at a spa, and Josephine was certain that Aix would have a brilliant season that year. But there were too many members of the former family there: Madame Letizia,

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Pauline, and Joseph's wife, who had become Queen of Spain. Hence her taste for this Tout Paris (where non-Parisians predominated) was spoiled, and she left for her little castle, Pregny; it, however, proved too small for her retinue. Immediately Josephine's head was filled with plans for rebuilding; but Malmaison drew her back to it, and all she took with her was a Swiss man and wife in "native dress," together with a few specimens of Swiss cattle. Naturally, not only was it necessary to make the picturesque costumes for this couple of the very best material, but a typical Swiss house had to be built for them; the quite considerable cost of this was surely justified by the fact that they knew the art of making genuine Swiss cheese. Even though this genuine Swiss cheese supplied only the imperial table — just like the Cheshire prepared at Malmaison by an Englishwoman — the satisfaction which was thus afforded soon caused the expense to be forgotten.

Another autumn in Malmaison, the autumn in which the Grand Army perished victoriously. After searching in vain for signs of any fateful presentiment in Josephine or any sympathetic understanding of the decline in that power which she had seen and by which she had been elevated, one would at least like to find the other side, the turning away from self, something of a soft, sun-steeped autumnal happiness, the melancholy of an afterglow, with flowers and animals around her — in short, all that is related in accounts of how it should have been. But nothing of this kind is to be found. Only the constant stream of visitors, the few royalists a little gloomy over the Malet attempt; the others — as before, in the majority — completely satisfied that everything had gone so very badly. And Josephine, so happy in receiving her visitors, so fond of finery, and as joyful as ever over buying things.

New Year's Day annoyed her, not only because her fiftieth birthday was approaching, but because it was Friday and 1813. But, after all, that year, which arrived in a manner so vexing to



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her, held promise of much joy. The most agreeable of duties filled her days, and in the intervals her whims, which had become almost a ritual, held sway. Hurriedly the sand ran through the hour-glass, and every grain was important; yet in a moment it had slipped through the fingers that so longed to hold it fast. The determination to be smart and to give free rein to her charms — a routine which amounted to an obsession — now filled the entire space of her life; it drove away any presentiments of fate or other ugly and wearisome emotions, just as the glittering Today banished every warning of Yesterday. Acting as if for a very long time all this had been entirely natural and safe seemed to give the assurance that it would be so for ever. What went on around Josephine is scarcely worth recording. But what happened was really what mattered to her, the things which could be described with the same bit of pleasure which she had in perceiving or experiencing them. Purchases, visits, repasts, the same walks through château and park, the same objects of interest for so long unseen through one's own eyes. Here a marriage, there gossip about a love-affair, petitioners, many games of patience. Amid everything a flaring restlessness: a wish to buy more, build more, to reshape Malmaison completely, as if in so doing to refashion her own life. The gentle murmur of the trickling sand was disguised in familiar sounds: in the deep, well-known cadence of conversation, in the arrival of the carriages, in the announcements of the servants, the monotonous counting at the games, the cry of forest birds in their aviaries. And all this drowned the noise of the falling blocks which were breaking ever more quickly from the imperial structure. The battle of Leipzig could scarcely any longer be heard, yet there were still, because of former victories, the reports of successes somewhere in Germany. But all this was politics, belonging to the business affairs of men. She became startled only when her friends and acquaintances pricked up their ears. Hortense, made uneasy over the proud

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image of the hero of her youth who had become a melancholy madman, and also anxious for herself and those belonging to her, worried her mother with reports of occurrences. Next "the five hundred thousand bayonets" were on their march to France. Josephine still continued as before. But an increasing number of her accomplished companions in play grew rather surprisingly anxious and stayed away. And it was not Napoleon's despairing struggle that entered her consciousness, but the presentiment that her own position, to which she had become so splendidly accustomed, might be in danger. She still tried, pretending that she was blind and deaf, to continue living as before. But this kind of life, dependent on fellow actors and supers, on merchants and salesmen, began to seem ghostly. At the hours of the day when formerly twenty carriages had stood waiting, there were now scarcely two. The tradesmen suddenly realized the value of the goods in their own hands as contrasted with the profits, suddenly so uncertain, from Josephine's ever ready purchases; so they kept away more and more. The desolation and loneliness of winter threatened Malmaison, and the people who still came brought news of the reality of conditions ever worse and more evident. If only Bonaparte at the auspicious time had become constable to the king! If only he had kept Josephine at his side! She herself had believed for a long time that the luck of the Empire, which otherwise had given her so little anxiety, had been going backwards ever since her divorce.

Finally from all the news and rumours it could no longer be doubted that Bonaparte — and suddenly that name was again heard everywhere — was now helpless to stem the advance of the Allies. Soon the report came that the Cossacks held the bridge at Neuilly and that Malmaison was threatened. Hence it was imperative for Josephine to seek another place of refuge; Navarre, which she had never loved, now seemed to be the proper place, for it was far removed from the march of the invaders. The sums of money

so heedlessly scattered through various drawers were gathered together, for Josephine all at once realized with a heavy heart that nothing could now come from Napoleon. A few of the people who went along with her contributed a little money, and thus she set out on the journey to her castle of Navarre — once again a journey filled with anxiety concerning her position in the world. The only authoritative reports that came to her through all the years — those from Napoleon — were now missing. And in Normandy, still unexcited because of its distance, each alternative rumour that arrived distorted and contradicted in the very next hour whatever news had preceded it. Next Paris was occupied, and then the Bourbon vultures made ready to seize the spoil derived from the victory over the eagle, a victory in which they had had no part whatever. By this time Marie-Louise was much more concerned about General Neipperg, her lover — for she also had one — than she was about the fate of her husband and her child. She wrote: “. . . For eighteen days General Neipperg has sent me no sign of life, so I know only the details of the daily reports. But with the entire world I rejoice over the *good news* which they contain. . . .” And if it had not been so much a matter of position and money with her, Josephine too, in view of the fact that the King was on his way to Paris, would probably have written in the same vein. She trembled in despair and did not at all understand the symptoms of the fact that Navarre was brimful of uncertain royalists and also those who, ready to change over to fealty to the King, had put themselves under their protection. Above everything else she was anxious about Malmaison, from which no news had come. She waited especially for messages from all the people who were under obligations to her and from whom she now expected some expression of gratitude.

In the dead of night Hortense arrived. She had wished to stay faithful to the Bonapartes to the very last moment. But she did not

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wish to surrender her children to that foolish Louis, whom she hated and who had finally demanded them. She also had made an attempt to attach herself to Marie-Louise; but, disillusioned by the indifference of the wife of Napoleon for the fate of the Emperor, and in view of the *sauve qui peut* attitude of all the Bonaparte followers, she had fled to her mother, determined to make use of all her common sense and intelligence to avail herself of Josephine's prestige for the benefit of her family.

On the 29th of March 1814 Josephine arrived in Navarre; on the 31st the Allied troops occupied Paris. One day later Hortense had reached Navarre. But all the attempts made to reassure Josephine could not dispel her fears concerning the fate of Malmaison. Hortense therefore agreed that Josephine should return there — although a little too soon, because a Bourbon emissary arrived in Navarre shortly after Josephine's departure and brought the assurance of respect and a promise of care, which would have been just as great a relief to Josephine's heart as it proved later to be free of obligation.

The last helping hand was reached out to Josephine from the most unexpected source. When there had been talk of a Russian marriage for Napoleon, Josephine had given assurance that she would readily have helped it along, but she had never had any contact with that court, except that the Tsar had drunk a toast to her in Erfurt during her absence. This same Tsar of all the Russias, about whom Napoleon at that time had spoken in almost an infatuated way and into whose impregnable country he later carried his unfortunate war, now showed all at once an interest in Josephine which he had denied the friend of Tilsit and Erfurt and the ally. He sent several envoys with assurances of friendship, and finally he himself paid a visit to Josephine, who in the mean time had again established herself in Malmaison. His example was soon followed by the King of Prussia and his two sons — one of whom

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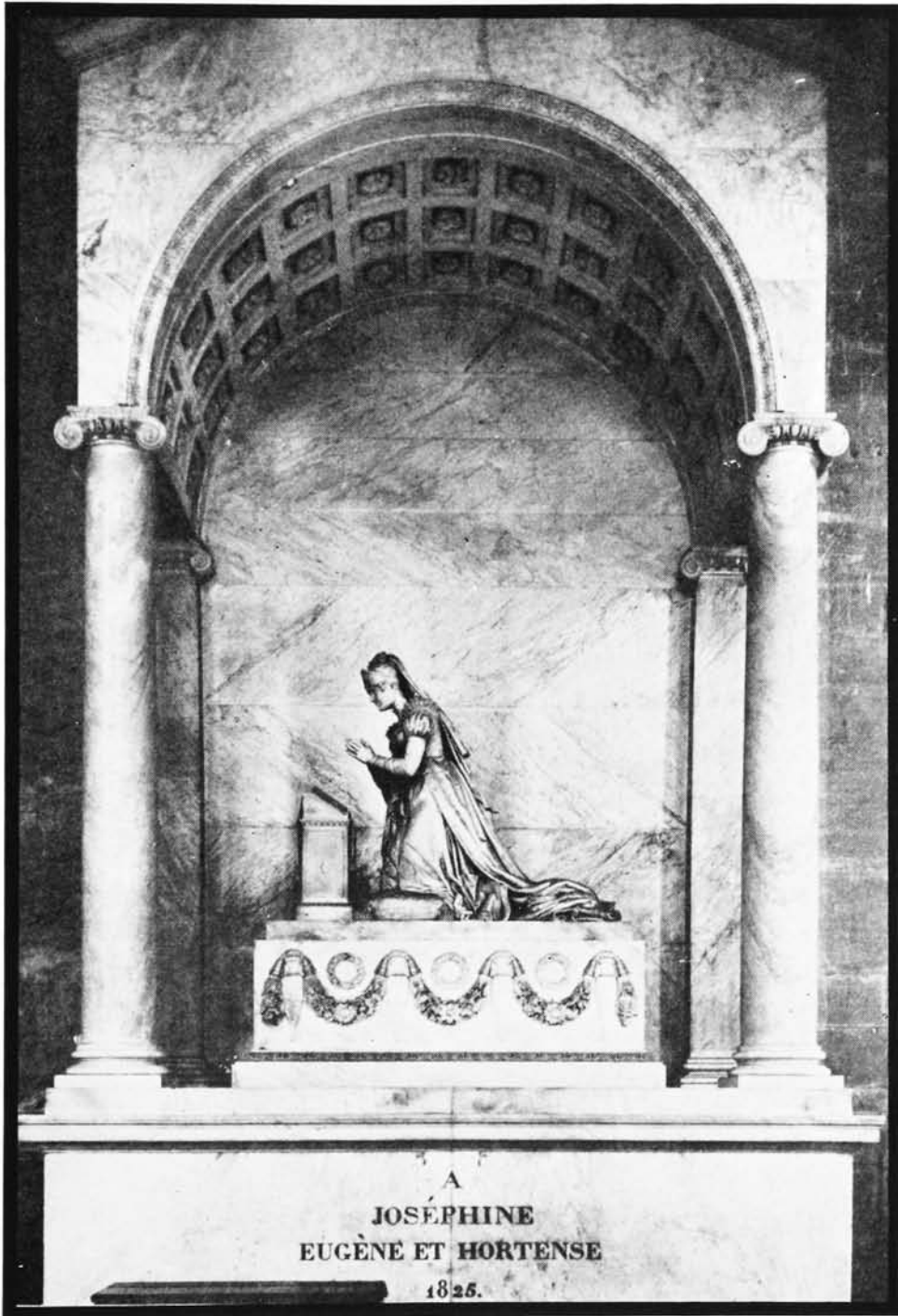
fifty-four years later received the sword of another defeated Napoleon. And when the news of those visits spread through Paris, and also the report that most of the princes accompanying the victorious troops had gone to pay their respects to Josephine, an ever greater majority of friends of rank, and also of Frenchmen, arrived in Malmaison; of course the new royalists considerably outnumbered the old group, who no longer had anything more to expect from Josephine. It was springtime, and, dressed in sheer muslin, Josephine walked untiringly through the gardens and hothouses with her guests; every morning she witnessed larger and more splendid arrivals at her château gates, and in addition to the pleasure of all these receptions she had the satisfaction of thinking that she thus was serving the interests of her family as well as preventing the possible jeopardizing of her position.

Napoleon had by this time been at Elba for a few weeks, where he waited in vain for news of Marie-Louise. Once in the days of the great collapse Josephine had expressed — rather than really meant — the desire to follow Napoleon into exile. But it was at the same time that she had spoken to Hortense about returning to Martinique — that same Martinique which long ago had become merely a faint recollection to her, and a thing which was an appurtenance to her Creole traits. If one had not already found out, from all that has been said before, how she acted about memories, these weeks would surely have shown it, when in the most unexpected way life and the present were again so entirely after her own heart.

Napoleon in his piteous agreement of abdication at Fontainebleau had bestowed more solicitude on Josephine and her children than on the rest of his entire family. But when the instalment due on the royal grant to Josephine — which was now fixed at one million a year — was not paid on time, she displayed her bad humour, not against the new rulers, but against Napoleon. After all, there

was very little said about him at Malmaison, and that very cautiously. When the Tsar so unexpectedly had volunteered to act as the champion of a lost cause, a special messenger was sent to Eugène — who had fled to his father-in-law in Munich — telling him to come at once to Paris because his interests required it. And bravely as the good-natured and rather mediocre son of Josephine had clung to the Emperor to the very last, he now readily allowed himself to be persuaded by his mother and sister to secure those very interests; the Empire had of course come to an end, and the marshals and high dignitaries vied with one another in the new servility of Today as they had in the treacheries of Yesterday. What Napoleon had disdained, Eugène made an effort to become: the constable of the Bourbons. Eugène was really received by Louis XVIII and was shown such distinction that Josephine grew quite indignant, because upon the first opportunity the newspapers made mention of her and Hortense merely as the mother and sister of Prince Eugène. But so far as the proper position for Eugène was concerned, it remained then and later a matter of only vague promises. Hortense, the “true Bonapartist,” fared better in her efforts to make her position secure, inasmuch as she does not seem to have felt any deep pain through the manner in which her wishes were fulfilled. The highest title which the King of France was able to bestow was that of a duke. And Hortense, to whom no one could gainsay the claim to her royal title, not only received from the hands of the Bourbons the ducal one created for her estate Saint-Leu, but even allowed her name to appear in the deed simply as Beauharnais, so that there was no mention made of either her kingdom or the name Bonaparte. When in her exile she again permitted herself to be addressed as Queen, the Bonapartist loyalty reawakened after this crisis had taken on for her the purely Beauharnais form of which we have spoken earlier.

Ever more frequently the Tsar came to Malmaison, and Jo-



THE TOMB OF JOSEPHINE, IN THE CHURCH AT RUEIL





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sephine displayed all her gifts to please him. But delighted as he seemed to be over the trivial remarks and stories which she told so gracefully in her agreeable voice, a still stronger attraction for his visits was Hortense, who in the charm of her early feminine maturity had become even more fascinating to him, through her natural reserve of manner. Alexander asked the favour of being permitted to visit Hortense's estate Saint-Leu. In those days Josephine felt unusually weary. She complained of it, but took it no more seriously herself than did the people around her, who long ago had grown accustomed to her unfounded hypochondria. At all events, she certainly did not wish to deny herself the pleasure of visiting Saint-Leu with the Tsar, although the day chosen was damp and chilly; nor would she consider dressing any less spring-like than during all those days of May. She returned with a cold and tried to cure herself with orange-blossom tea and other trifling remedies which had been given to her under similar circumstances. But she was in no mood to take care of herself, because the Tsar, who was now almost like an old friend, came very nearly every day, and illustrious guests swarmed around her.

Take care of herself? Did she not have duties to such guests? Yet there certainly was something wrong with her physically. In former times, even amid the greatest anxieties, she had slept exceedingly well and had a better appetite than usual. But now her nights were very restless, and the rarest delicacies on the table tempted her less and less. She did not admit that she was ill — it was too unsuitable a moment for that. On the 23rd of May she had for her guests at dinner, in addition to the Tsar, the Emperor of Austria (Marie-Louise's father!), the King of Prussia, and several German princes. She opened the ball with Alexander and afterwards took a long walk around the park with him and her other guests, though the night was cool. And thus for two more days the festivities continued, receptions and banquets and "ten

times more brilliant holdings of court than ever had taken place since her divorce." With all these experiences the happy assurance ran through her feverish blood like champagne that within the next few days she would be received by the King. The Empire had crumbled away into nothingness; the pamphleteers who desired to please Louis XVIII heaped all kinds of contumely upon the name of Napoleon. But Josephine remained the Empress, Marie-Louise having long ago disappeared into Austria with her son. And the reception by the King (who believed the twenty years of the Revolution and the Empire were already totally undone) was to make her position secure. She did not comprehend the absurdity of her hope in expecting from the Bourbons the confirmation of her royal dignity — but she was spared that inevitable disappointment at the hands of her King; also the fluctuations of excitement and the terrible exhaustion. For suddenly a very real illness came on and she was no longer aware of anything. Quickly the raging high fever dulled her faculties, and hence she never knew the peace that arrives before entrance into the great eternal rest, the consciousness of the body and the soul before their final parting.

On the evening of May 27 it became necessary for Hortense to do the honours for the Tsar and the other guests. Among these it is said there was an Englishman who had become acquainted with Josephine in Martinique and who had loved her his whole life. He had come hoping to renew their friendship, but he never even saw her again.

The illness, evidently a septic angina, met no resistance. Soon the pulse could scarcely be felt, the breathing was but a faint rattle in the throat. Throughout the night of May 28–9 Josephine lay unconscious in restless exhaustion. In the morning — it was Whit Sunday — a priest, hurriedly summoned, administered extreme unction, and soon after eight o'clock she died.

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A few hours later Eugène and Hortense left the dead, obeying a ceremonial rule concerning the passing of sovereigns; they stayed away, so that the “ death-watch, the last farewell, and the funeral took place without them.”

Josephine’s body was embalmed and solemnly enclosed in a leaden casket surrounded by one of wood. More than twenty thousand people passed by her bier. But the black draperies in the church of Rueil (the parish to which Malmaison belongs) had no imperial crown nor coat of arms nor monogram. And the troops who on the 2nd of June rendered military honours to the funeral procession were detachments of the Russian body-guard sent by the Tsar. Josephine was buried in the church of Rueil, in the grave over which there still stands today the monument that represents her kneeling, dressed in robes of state, as she once had knelt in Notre Dame before the Pope.


From a news report at Elba, Napoleon learned of Josephine’s death, and he shut himself up in deep mourning. When he, like a ghost risen from the dead and distracted by what he had passed through, again returned to France, he visited Malmaison. And when later, crazed as one becomes who finds the world appallingly changed and who raves instead of reasons—when at the end of those Hundred Days he was forced to seek refuge, it was in Malmaison that he awaited his sentence. “ At sight of the deserted gardens, the rooms no longer inhabited, the galleries where all festivity was stilled, the reception-halls where song and music had died away,” he prepared himself for his farewell to that shattered world which his genius had created and his demon had destroyed. And he went through Josephine’s rooms, which smelled a little musty and yet held a remnant of her fragrance, and he said to himself: “ She really loved me, she really loved me. . . .”




# INDEX







JOSEPHINE



INDEX

- Abrantès, Duchesse d', 159, 285, 338  
Aiguillon, Duchesse d', 108, 113  
Alexander I, Tsar, 317, 322, 331, 360, 362-3, 364, 365  
Alexander the Great, 154, 182, 190, 208, 217, 331  
Anne, Grand Duchess, 331  
Artois, Comte d', 343  
Augusta Amelia, Princess (wife of Eugène de Beauharnais), 355  
Augustus, Emperor, 286
- Bacciochi, Elisa, *see* Bonaparte, Elisa  
Barnave, 85  
Barras, 131, 137-40, 142-3, 146, 147, 148, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 164, 166-7, 169, 170, 171, 172, 186, 194, 209, 212, 213, 215-16, 218, 221, 222, 237, 243, 262, 325
- Baudin, 242  
Bausset, 335  
Beauharnais, Alexandre de: childhood in Martinique, 11, 18-19; pretensions to nobility, 16, 58, 90; birth, 18; youth, 19-20; marriage, 21, 22, 24-5, 31, 32; character, 26, 29, 138; education, 27-8, 41; and Josephine, 30, 33, 34-5, 36-8, 39-41, 42-3, 46, 47-54, 55-7, 59, 60, 63, 65, 66, 68-9, 70, 76, 77, 78, 85-6, 93, 94-5, 101-2, 106, 130, 166, 168, 186, 260, 302, 303, 325, 329, 332; trip to Italy, 41; return to Martinique, 44-5; and the Revolution, 77-8, 83, 86-8, 91-2, 95-101; imprisonment, 101-2, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 117-18, 268; execution, 118, 120, 121, 288; estates seized, 126, 140; legend of

- confiscated sword, 156, 157
- Beauharnais, Eugène-Rose de, 39, 40, 47, 56, 57–8, 69–70, 78, 88, 93, 106, 108, 109, 118, 120, 127, 128, 130, 131, 142, 156, 166, 168, 205, 212, 218, 228, 229–30, 231, 236, 245, 259, 260, 266, 314, 336, 338, 348, 355, 365
- Beauharnais, Eugénie-Hortense de, 46, 47, 48–9, 56, 57–8, 70, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 93, 106, 107, 108, 109, 118, 120, 126, 130, 142, 166, 168, 184, 203, 205, 212, 245, 259–61, 266, 282–3, 285, 287, 288, 311, 313, 314, 316, 317, 327, 334–5, 341, 343, 349, 351, 357–8, 359–60, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365
- Beauharnais, Fanny, 82–3
- Beauharnais, François de (Alexandre's father), 8, 12, 15–18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 31, 33, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 51, 53, 55, 56, 57, 60, 63, 64, 66, 70, 75, 76, 87, 90, 96, 99, 126, 130, 148, 166, 332
- Beauharnais, François de (Alexandre's brother), 18, 19, 20, 27–8, 82, 83, 93
- Beauharnais, Mme François de (Alexandre's mother), 16–17, 18, 19, 20, 38
- Beauharnais, Marquise de (wife of the younger François), 82, 83
- Beaumarchais, 37
- Bellini, Giovanni, 274
- Bercy, Marquis de, 94
- Bernadotte, 242
- Berthier, 201–2, 209, 227, 230, 243–4
- Bonaparte, Caroline, 285, 314, 326, 341
- Bonaparte, Charles, 153, 159
- Bonaparte, Elisa, 285, 326
- Bonaparte, Jérôme, 259, 260
- Bonaparte, Joseph, 158–9, 171, 193, 224, 228–9, 230, 231, 238, 281, 282, 283, 285, 288, 290, 356
- Bonaparte, Letizia, 158, 179, 220, 239, 256–7, 275, 289, 334, 355
- Bonaparte, Louis, 153, 259, 260–1, 282, 283, 285, 290, 349, 360
- Bonaparte, Louis-Eugène-Napoléon, 351
- Bonaparte, Lucien, 171, 238, 242, 245, 281, 282, 283
- Bonaparte, Napoleon, *see* Napoleon I
- Bonaparte, Pauline, 257, 259, 303, 326, 356



- 
- Borghese, Count, 303  
 Borghese, Pauline, *see* Bonaparte, Pauline  
 Bourrienne, 222, 227, 234, 237, 240, 264, 265  
 Brienne, 75  
 Brigitte, 48  
 Brune, 221, 222, 238  
 Brunswick, Duke of, 98  
 Burckhardt, Jakob, 28, 269  
  
 Cabarrus, 132  
 Cabarrus, Térézia, 37, 120, 121, 122, 131, 132-5, 136, 137, 139, 143, 145-6, 147, 148, 153, 190, 194, 216, 257, 262  
 Cæsar, Julius, 208, 217  
 Calmelet, 170  
 Calonne, 67, 75  
 Cambacérés, 279  
 Cambon, 134  
 Carnot, 165, 170, 186, 187, 190, 212-13  
 Carrier, 132  
 Champigny, 114  
 Charles I, King of England, 108  
 Charles IV, King of Spain, 280  
 Charles the Great, 286  
 Charles, Hippolyte, 196, 198-9, 204-5, 209, 213, 215, 216, 217, 219, 221, 222, 225, 226, 230, 231, 238, 244, 270, 319, 323-4  
 Chateaubriand, 76, 219, 293, 322  
 Chénier, André, 125, 215  
 Chimay-Caraman, Prince, 132  
 Clary, 159  
 Clary, Désirée, 159  
 Clary, Julie, 159  
 Claude Lorrain, 274  
 Clermont-Tonnerre, 85  
 Collot, 240  
 Columbus, 71  
 Condé, 93  
 Constant, 289  
 Corneille, 197  
 Correggio, 274  
 Corvisart, 296, 335  
 Coulaincourt, 147  
 Couthon, 109, 110, 114  
 Cromwell, 154  
 Custine, 100  
 Custine, Delphine de, 111, 113  
 Cuyp, 274  
  
 Dalmas, 281  
 Danton, 99, 106  
 David, 138, 215, 269, 288  
 Desmoulins, Camille, 81  
 Dorival, 114  
 Driault, Edouard, 184  
 Dumas, René-François, 114  
 Dumouriez, 112  
 Duport, 85  
 Durfort, 114

- Emmery, 130-1  
 Enghien, 287  
 Eugénie, Empress, 304
- Fechner, 43  
 Fesch, Cardinal, 275, 290  
 Fontaine, Pierre-François-Léonard, 270  
 Fontenay, Marquis de, 37  
 Fouché, 132, 222, 242, 281, 308, 328, 329, 331  
 Fouquier-Tinville, 109, 111, 114, 115  
 Fourès, 228  
 Fourès, Pauline, 228, 229, 234  
 Francis I, Emperor, 286, 317, 363  
 Francis of Assisi, St., 249  
 Frederick II, King of Prussia (the Great), 318  
 Frederick II, King of Württemberg, 344  
 Frederick William III, King of Prussia, 360  
 Frederick William IV, King of Prussia, 361
- Garat, 280  
 Gérard, 309  
 Goethe, 160, 322  
 Gohier, 237  
 Gondrecourt, 114  
 Gros, 309  
 Guédreville, 114  
 Guise, Duc de, 283
- Haydn, 89  
 Hermann, 334  
 Hoche, Lazare, 111-13, 116, 126, 127-8, 131, 142, 145, 160, 212  
 Hoche, Mme, 128  
 Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Princess Amalia von, 92-3, 95  
 Hortense, Queen, *see* Beauharnais, Eugénie-Hortense de  
 Hosten, Mme, 93, 95, 107  
 Houssaye, Arsène, 132  
 Hugo, Victor, 207
- Isabey, 288, 309  
 Jung, Th., 151, 182
- Jammès, Francis, 4  
 Jean Paul (Richter), 298  
 Josephine: recollections of her childhood, 3-5; interest in tropical plants, 3-4, 224, 272; and Malmaison, 3-4, 224-5, 226, 254, 268, 270-4, 297, 339, 342, 349-54, 356-9, 360, 361-4; a Creole, 4-5; ancestry, 5-8; parentage, 8-9; birth, 9; childhood, 9-15; education, 11, 12; at the convent, 12-14; appearance at fifteen, 13, 21, 25, 31; self-admiration, 14; love of clothes and jewels, 14, 59-60, 105, 216, 274-

- 5; marriage to Beauharnais, 21-5, 31, 32-3; goes to France, 22; arrival at Brest, 22, 25, 30; goes to Paris, 30-1; early married life, 33-7, 38-9, 40-3, 44, 45-7; reading, 38-9, 301-2; confinements, 39, 46-7; removal to the rue Saint-Charles, 42, 47; accused by Beauharnais, 47-53; at the Abbey of Panthémont, 54-63, 124, 125, 325; dissolution of the marriage, 54-7, 60; at Fontainebleau, 63-6, 67, 68; appearance at this time, 65; alleged lovers, 65-6, 104; sees the King and Queen, 68; mysterious return to Martinique, 69-71, 75; and the Revolution, 75, 80-2, 84-6, 97-8, 101-2, 104-6; in Martinique, 76-9; return to France, 79-82; as Citizeness Beauharnais, 83, 84-6, 87, 88, 91, 92-5, 97-8; exerts herself on Beauharnais's behalf, 102; arrest, 107; imprisonment, 107-11, 112-13, 116, 120, 121; and Hoche, 111, 112-13, 116, 127-8; parting from Beauharnais, 117-18; release, 120, 121, 122, 124, 125; life in the rue de l'Université, 126-31, 133, 134, 136, 137, 138, 139; appearance about 1794, 138-9; at Croissy, 140-1; in the rue Chante-reine, 141-3, 147-50, 161; letters quoted, 148, 162, 166-7, 168-9, 199-200; first meeting with Napoleon, 152, 156-7, 159-60; friendship with Napoleon, 161-9; hesitation before accepting, 166-9; betrothal and marriage, 170-2, 175; during the Italian campaign, 176-213; journey to Italy urged, 183-6; delay and excuses, 186-95; goes to Milan, 195, 196; in Italy, 195, 196-8, 199-206, 209-11, 213; return to France, 213, 214-17; and the Egyptian campaign, 217, 218, 222, 223, 230, 231-2; goes to Plombières, 218, 220, 221; relations with the Bonaparte family, 220, 225-6, 227, 230, 231, 256-61, 288, 303, 307, 313, 326; barrenness, 220-1, 256, 282, 284, 314, 327; injured in fall, 222; unfaithfulness, 228, 229-30, 240; and Napoleon's return from Egypt, 236-8, 239, 241, 244-6, 251; divorce, 239-40, 313, 314-15, 328,

- 330, 332, 334-8; greed and extravagance, 263, 264-77, 300-1, 342, 353-4; transformation, 251-6, 261-3; debts, 264-5, 301, 342; lacking in religious strain, 267; and the Luxembourg, 268-9; interest in horticulture, 272-3; and art, 273-4; charity, 277, 302-3; and the growth of Napoleon's power, 278-9, 282-3; arranges Hortense's marriage, 282-3; becomes Empress, 285-6, 287-9, 293; portraits, 288, 308-10; coronation dress, 288-9, 290; religious marriage to Napoleon, 289-90; coronation, 290-2; restlessness, 294-6, 298; hypochondria, 296-7; and commercial activity, 299-301; as Empress, 303-12, 313-15, 316, 317-19, 320-1, 323-7, 328, 329-38; jealousy, 313-15, 320; leaves the Tuileries, 339; retirement at Malmaison, 339-43, 344-5, 346, 347, 349-54, 356-9; income, 342; goes to Navarre, 345-6, 347-8, 349, 358-9, 360; and Marie-Louise, 347, 348-9, 353-4; last meeting with Napoleon, 354-5; goes to Milan, 355; and Pregny, 355, 356; last days, 360-4; death, 364; funeral, 365
- Joubert, 226, 234  
 Julien, 230  
 Jung, *see* Jung, Th.  
 Junot, 184, 185, 227, 230
- Kant, Immanuel, 175  
 Kaunitz, Count, 317  
 Kilmaine, 204  
 Kléber, 233  
 Körner, Theodor, 219
- Lamballe, 116  
 Lameth, Alexandre, 85  
 Lanoy, Citizeness, 106, 107, 108, 129  
 Las Cases, 152  
 La Valette, Mme, 287  
 Lebon, 132  
 Lebrun, 279  
 Legendre, 119  
 Lévy, Arthur, 317  
 Louis, 48  
 Louis XIV, 26, 62  
 Louis XV, 13, 24, 25, 26, 62  
 Louis XVI, 24, 37, 67-8, 78, 80, 84, 85, 87, 91, 101, 104, 114, 119, 148, 332, 344  
 Louis XVIII, 283, 359, 362, 364  
 Louis-Napoleon, *see* Napoleon III  
 Loulou, *see* Bonaparte, Louis-Eugène-Napoléon

- Luckner, 98  
Lulli, 89
- Malesherbes, 26  
Malet, 351, 356  
Maria Feodorovna, Tsarina, 331  
Marie-Antoinette, 67, 68, 91, 214, 284, 306, 332, 344, 347  
Marie-Louise, Archduchess, later Empress, 320, 342, 344, 345, 346-7, 348-9, 350, 353-4, 359, 360, 361, 363, 364  
Marion (mulatto), 3, 9, 14, 30  
Masséna, 238  
Masson, Frédéric, 11, 25, 184, 251, 265, 275  
Maurepas, 67  
Maury, Abbé, 85  
Maximilian I, King of Bavaria, 362  
Mecklenberg, Duke of, 336  
Médicis, Marie de, 107  
Méhul, 215  
Ménil, 114  
Menou, 114  
Mercier, 229  
Metsu, 274  
Metternich, 315-16, 322  
Metternich, Countess, 343  
Michelangelo, 89, 208, 209  
Michelet, 89, 123, 323  
Miot, 284  
Mirabeau, 86  
Molière, 240  
Mollien, 340-1, 354  
Monk, 278, 283  
Montesquiou, 147, 286  
Montijo, Eugenia de, 304  
Montmorency, 286  
Moulin, Mme de, 139  
Murat, 155, 185, 189, 290, 341  
Murat, Caroline, *see* Bonaparte, Caroline  
Murillo, 274
- Napoleon I: arrival in France, 22; writer's treatment of, 28, 151; and Fontainebleau, 68; quoted, 144-5, 159, 163-4, 178-80, 182-4, 185, 189, 190, 191-2, 193, 194-5, 201-2, 204, 207, 228-9, 258, 279, 317, 318, 319, 348; and Mme Tallien, 145-6; defends the Convention, 153, 154-6; early life, 153-4; first meeting with Josephine, 156-7, 159-60; appearance and character, 157-9; friendship with Josephine, 160-7, 168-9; betrothal and marriage, 170-2, 175; during the Italian campaign, 176, 177-95, 197-8, 199-204, 205, 207-14; return to Paris, 214-16; and the Egyptian campaign, 217-18,

- 219, 221, 222, 223, 226, 227, 228, 231; and his family, 220, 225, 226, 231, 258-9, 260; and Malmaison, 224, 271; and Josephine's infidelity, 227-9, 230, 232; return to France, 233-5, 236-46, 251; relations with Josephine, 254-6, 257, 261, 262, 264, 266, 267-70, 275, 276, 277, 278, 282-4, 285, 286, 294, 296, 297, 298, 300, 301, 302, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 311-12, 314, 315-23, 324, 325-9, 330, 331-8, 340-1, 342, 344-5, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 354, 358, 359, 361-2, 364, 365; becomes Consul for life, 279-82; becomes Emperor, 286-8; coronation, 289, 290, 291, 292; and Marie-Louise, 343-5, 347, 360, 361  
 Napoleon II, 348, 354, 355, 359, 364  
 Napoleon III, 6, 304, 351, 361  
 Necker, 67, 149  
 Neipperg, 359  
 Nelson, 226  
 Nicolle, 119  
 Nietzsche, 249, 298, 311  
 Noailles, 85  
 Nodier, Charles, 280  
 Ostade, 274  
 Ouvrard, 136-7, 143, 169, 294  
 Ovid, 41  
 Palma Vecchio, 274  
 Pasquier, 140  
 Patricol, 27, 28, 40, 41, 117  
 Permon, Laura, 227  
 Permon, Mme, 157, 159, 227  
 Perugino, 274  
 Pius VI, Pope, 191, 204, 236  
 Pius VII, Pope, 267, 287, 289, 291-2, 333, 338, 365  
 Plaigne, Éléonore Denuelle de la, 314  
 Polignac, 37, 350  
 Potter, Paul, 274  
 Poussin, 274  
 Pradt, de, 322  
 Prudhon, 309  
 Rameau, 89  
 Raphael, 208, 209, 274  
 Raynal, 26  
 Réal, 94, 237  
 Récamier, Mme, 149  
 Rembrandt, 274  
 Rémusat, Mme de, 93, 287, 295, 348, 351  
 Renaudin, 17-18, 19  
 Renaudin, Mme, *see* Tascher de la Pagerie, Marie-Désirée  
 Rilke, 219  
 Rivarol, 38  
 Robespierre, 99, 109, 110, 111,

- 112, 115, 116, 119, 121,  
122, 131, 133, 134, 154  
Rochefoucauld, Countess of La,  
350  
Rochefoucauld, Duc de La, 28–  
9, 36, 37, 78, 97  
Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Duc  
de La, 84, 85  
Rœderer, 308, 328  
Rohan, 28  
Roland, Mme, 92  
Rome, King of, *see* Napoleon II  
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 26, 28,  
76, 117  
Rubens, 274  
Ruysdael, 274
- Saint-Just, 99, 109, 111, 112,  
116, 134  
Saint-Pierre, Bernardin de, 215  
Salm-Kyrburg, Prince, 92–3,  
95, 117  
Samson, 118–19  
Sanois, 8, 9, 10  
Sanois, Rose-Claire Des Vergers  
de (Josephine's mother), 8,  
9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 47, 52,  
76, 77, 79, 130, 332  
Seghers, 274  
Séгур, 147, 286, 305  
Serbelloni, Duke of, 191  
Sévigné, Mme de, 89, 90  
Sieyès, 226, 243  
Staël, Mme de, 149  
Stendhal, 256
- Strindberg, 69  
Swinburne, 339
- Talleyrand, 146, 167, 214, 242,  
264, 308, 318, 328  
Tallien, 94, 121, 122, 131,  
132–5, 143, 147, 148, 155,  
170  
Tallien, Mme, *see* Cabarrus,  
Térédia  
Talma, 141, 215  
Tascher de la Pagerie, Cathe-  
rine-Désirée, 9, 11, 14, 20, 21  
Tascher de la Pagerie, Gaspard-  
Joseph, 7, 8, 15, 16, 18, 19  
Tascher de la Pagerie, Joseph-  
Gaspard (Josephine's fa-  
ther), 8, 9, 10–12, 20, 21,  
22, 30, 32–3, 35, 42, 52, 76,  
77, 79  
Tascher de la Pagerie, Manette,  
9, 11, 14, 20, 21, 76, 77, 79  
Tascher de la Pagerie, Marie-  
Désirée, 7–8, 12, 16–18, 19–  
20, 21, 22, 30–3, 35, 40,  
41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 50–1,  
53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59,  
63, 64, 66–7, 69, 70, 76, 77,  
82, 87, 126, 130, 148, 166,  
199, 303, 325, 332  
Tascher de la Pagerie, Ste-  
phanie, 6  
Tennant, 182  
Tercier, 14, 15, 50  
Thiébauld, 241–2

- 
- |                                            |                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Thiers, 114, 259                           | Walewska, Maria, 319–20,<br>330                     |
| Titian, 274                                | Walewski, Count, 320                                |
| Tolstoi, 322                               | Ward, Ire, 98                                       |
| Turgot, 26                                 | Weber, Ernst Heinrich, 43                           |
| Turquan, 286                               | William I, King of Prussia, later<br>Emperor, 360–1 |
| Vandal, 239                                | Wurmser, 201                                        |
| Van Dyke, 108, 274                         | Württemberg, Katharina von,<br>344                  |
| Vély, 114                                  |                                                     |
| Victor Amadeus, King of Sar-<br>dinia, 185 |                                                     |





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