

HISTORY

OF THE

EMPRESS

JOSEPHINE,

THE CONSORT OF

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.



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EMPRESS JOSEPHINE.

This distinguished lady was born on the 24th of June, 1763 on the island of Martinique, and while very young was taken to France by her father to marry the viscount Beauharnois. Two children were the fruits of this union, which during one period was not altogether felicitous. Certain suspicions took place on the part of the husband, the tribunals were appealed to, and a separation was demanded. These at length decreed that the facts adduced were too uncertain to obtain a decree of so serious a nature, and the husband and wife were at length prevailed upon to resume their former intercourse.

They now re-appeared at court, where they had always been well received. Madame de Beauharnois, who was a great favourite with the queen, about this time began to be considered one of the handsomest women in the royal circle at Versailles, and entered into all the dissipations of that period. But the assembling of the states-general, and the events that already seemed to prognosticate an approaching revolution, soon banished every idea of gaiety and pleasure from the palace of the kings of France. Her majesty often testified her fears on this subject in private to Josephine, little dreaming that her friend should one day become her successor; while the latter, in her turn, evinced great uneasiness at the conduct of her brother-in-law, the marquis de Beauharnois, who then occupied a seat among the representatives of the nation.

This general inquietude was soon followed by a private alarm. Her own husband, who had been for some time a field-officer, and always evinced an eager desire for glory, was now about to join the army, in consequence of an unexpected declaration of war. He accordingly repaired to his regiment, and soon attained the rank of general. But although attached to, and beloved in turn by, Louis XVI.; he readily perceived that this monarch was destined, at no distant period, to lose that

phantom of power which he then enjoyed, together with his life at one and the same moment. When all this occurred, as had been foreseen, M. de Beauharnois himself was denounced as an aristocrat by his own soldiers, deprived of his commission by superior authority, and conducted to Paris, where he was placed in a state of arrest. Josephine, the sensibility of whose heart is well known, immediately interposed, and adopted every possible mode, both through the medium of friends as well as by her own personal solicitations, to obtain his liberty. Her husband, on his part, was deeply moved by the affectionate attachment and unceasing assiduity of his wife, who was not only soon after denied the pleasure of consoling her unhappy husband, but actually deprived of her own liberty, having been seized and confined at the convent of the Carmelites. In the course of a few weeks, the unfortunate vicomte was carried before the revolutionary tribunal, which instantly condemned him to death.

Dr. Memes has published so interesting an account of the empress Josephine, that we gladly avail ourselves of his valuable "Memoirs," which throw much new light on the domestic life of this accomplished female. Josephine, we need not remind our readers, was a Creole. The native elegance of mind and manner so often possessed by these transatlantic Europeans, their aptness in the acquisition of all external accomplishments, their warm temperament modified and restrained by natural self-possession, are generally known:—"As regards accomplishments, she played, especially on the harp, and sung, with exquisite feeling, and with science sufficient to render listening an intellectual pleasure without exciting the surmise that the cultivation of an attainment less showy, but more valuable, had been sacrificed. Her dancing is said to have been perfect. An eye-witness describes her light form; rising scarcely above the middle size, as seeming in its faultless symmetry to float rather than to move—the very personation of grace. She exercised her pencil, and—though such be now antiquated for an *elegante*—her needle and embroidering frame, with beautiful address. A love of flowers, that truly feminine inspiration, and, according to a master in elegance and virtue,

infallible index of purity of heart, was with her no uninstructed admiration. She had early cultivated a knowledge of botany, a study of all others especially adapted to the female mind, which exercises without fatiguing the understanding, and leads the thoughts to hold converse with heaven through the sweetest objects of earth. To the empress Josephine, France and Europe are indebted for one of the most beautiful of vegetable productions—the *Camelie*. In all to which the empire of woman's taste rightly extends, hers was exquisitely just, and simple as it was refined. Her sense of the becoming and the proper in all things, and under every variety of circumstances, appeared native and intuitive. She read delightfully; and nature had been here peculiarly propitious, for so harmonious were the tones of her voice, even in the most ordinary conversation, that instances are common of those who, coming unexpectedly and unseen within their influence, have remained as if suddenly fascinated and spell-bound, till the sounds ceased or fears of discovery forced the listener away. Like the harp of David or the troubled breast of Israel's king, this charm is known to have wrought powerfully upon Napoleon. His own admission was, 'The first applause of the French people sounded in my ear sweet as the voice of Josephine.' "

A circumstance, trifling in itself, but for after events deserves to be recorded here—the prophetic intimation to Josephine, when little advanced beyond childhood, of her future high destinies. We need not express our utter rejection of the supposition that the prophetess believed her own prediction. We see, in the course of Josephine's story, that her remembrance of it aided to direct the course of events to its fulfilment. Still its coincidence, with a course of events which could be so directed, remains a startling and unaccountable fact.

"One day, some time before my first marriage, while taking my usual walk, I observed a number of negro girls assembled round an old woman, engaged in telling their fortunes. I drew near to observe their proceedings. The old sybil, on beholding me, uttered a loud exclamation, and almost b

force seized my hand. She appeared to be under the greatest agitation. Amused at these absurdities, as I thought them, I allowed her to proceed, saying, 'So you discover something extraordinary in my destiny?'—'Yes.'—'Is happiness or misfortune to be my lot?'—'Misfortune. Ah, stop!—and happiness too.'—'You take care not to commit yourself, my good dame; your oracles are not the most intelligible.'—'I am not permitted to render them more clear,' said the woman, raising her eyes with a mysterious expression towards heaven. 'But to the point,' replied I, for my curiosity began to be excited; 'What read you concerning me in futurity?'—'What do I see in the future? You will not believe me if I speak.'—'Yes, indeed, I assure you. Come, my good mother, what am I to fear and hope?'—'On your own head be it then; listen: you will be married soon: that union will not be happy; you will become a widow, and then—then you will be queen of France! Some happy years will be yours; but you will die in an hospital, amid civil commotion.'

"'On concluding these words,' continued Josephine, 'the old woman burst from the crowd, and hurried away, as fast as her limbs, enfeebled by age, would permit. I forbade the bystanders to molest or banter the pretended prophetess on this ridiculous prediction; and took occasion, from the seeming absurdity of the whole proceeding, to caution the young negresses how they gave heed to such matters.'"

We have already stated that Josephine was arrested; and the merited but dreadful end of Robespierre alone saved Madame de Beauharnois, with about seventy others, destined for the usual morning sacrifice to the "deities of Reason and Revolution." Had we not her own confession, it might be deemed altogether incredible, that, under such circumstances, Josephine's thoughts should involuntarily revert to, and dwell upon, the singular prediction which has been reported in the commencement of these memoirs. "In spite of myself," said the empress, long after, to her ladies, "I incessantly revolved in my mind this prophecy. Accustomed thus to exercise imagination, every thing that had been told me began to appear less absurd, and finally terminated in

my almost certain belief. One morning, the jailer entered the chamber, which served as a bedroom for the duchess d'Aiguillon, myself, and two other ladies, telling me that he came to take away my flock bed, in order to give it to another captive. "How give it?" eagerly interrupted Madame d'Aiguillon; "is then Madame de Beauharnois to have a better?"—"No, no; she will not need one," replied the wretch, with an atrocious laugh; "she is to be taken to a new lodging, and from thence to the guillotine." At these words, my companions in misfortune set up a loud lamentation. I consoled them in the best manner I could. At length, wearied by their continued bewailings, I told them that there was not even common sense in their grief; that not only should I not die, but that I should become queen of France. "Why, then, do you not appoint your household?" asked Madame d'Aiguillon, with something like resentment. "Ah! that is true—I had forgotten. Well, my dear, you shall be maid of honour; I promise you the situation." Upon this the tears of these ladies flowed more abundantly; for they thought, on seeing my coolness at such a crisis, that misfortune had affected my reason. "I do assure you," continued the empress, addressing the auditory, "that I did not affect a courage which I felt not; for I was even then persuaded that my oracle was about to be realized."

But we must now proceed to detail the means by which the future empress of France escaped from the guillotine, beneath whose stroke her husband had suffered. The death of Robespierre, and the reprieve, at least, of his victims, was announced to the prisoners next morning. Josephine thus states the circumstances:—"Madame d'Aiguillon, feeling herself ill from the thoughts of my approaching execution, so abruptly communicated, I drew her towards the window, which I opened, in order to admit air. I then perceived a woman of the lower class, who was making many gestures to us, which we could not understand. Every moment she caught and held up her gown, without our finding it possible to comprehend her meaning. Observing her to persevere, I cried out 'Robe' (a gown), on which she made a sign of affirmation. Then, taking

up a stone, she put it in her apron, and again held up her gown to us, raising the stone in the other hand; '*pierre*' (stone), I called out to her in return. Her joy was extreme on perceiving, to a certainty, that we at length understood her. Putting the stone into her gown, she, several times, and with great eagerness, made the sign of cutting a throat, and fell a-dancing and shouting. At the very moment, we heard a great noise in the corridor, and the formidable voice of the turnkey, who was speaking to his dog, and, in the act of kicking him away, cried out, 'Go, you brute of a Robespierre!' This energetic phraseology proved we had nothing to fear, and that France was saved. In fact, a few minutes after, we beheld our companions in misfortune burst into our apartment, to give us the details of that grand event! It was the 9th Thermidor! My flock bed was restored to me, and, upon this couch, I passed the most delightful night of my life. I fell asleep, after saying to my companions,—'You see I am not guillotined—and *I shall yet be queen of France.*' "

We now come to the period of the marriage of Josephine with Napoleon, who was then but a young soldier of fortune. The following letter will best shew the state of her affections towards Napoleon, and the views which induced her to accept his hand:

"My dear friend,—I am urged to marry again: my friends counsel the measure, my aunt almost lays her injunctions upon me to the same effect, and my children entreat my compliance. Why are you not here to give me your advice in this important conjuncture? to persuade me that I ought to consent to an union, which must put an end to the irksomeness of my present position? Your friendship, in which I have already experienced so much to praise, would render you clear-sighted for my interests; and I should decide without hesitation as soon as you had spoken. You have met General Bonaparte in my house. Well!—he it is who would supply a father's place to the orphans of Alexander de Beauharnois, and a husband's to his widow.

"Do you love him?" you will ask. Not exactly. "You then dislike him?" Not quite so bad; but I find myself in

that state of indifference which is any thing but agreeable, and which, to devotees in religion, gives more trouble than all their other peccadilloes. Love, being a species of worship, also requires that one feel very differently from all this ; and hence the need I have of your advice, which might fix the perpetual irresolution of my feeble character. To assume a determination has ever appeared fatiguing to my Creole supineness, which finds it infinitely more convenient to follow the will of others.

“ I admire the general’s courage, the extent of his information—for, on all subjects he talks equally well—and the quickness of his judgment, which enables him to seize the thoughts of others almost before they are expressed ; but, I confess it, I shrink from the despotism he seems desirous of exercising over all who approach him. His searching glance has something singular and inexplicable, which imposes even on our directors : judge if it may not intimidate a woman ! Even—what ought to please me—the force of a passion, described with an energy that leaves not a doubt of his sincerity, is precisely the cause which arrests the consent I am often on the point of pronouncing.

“ Being now past the heyday of youth, can I hope long to preserve that ardour of attachment which in the general resembles a fit of delirium ? If, after our union, he should cease to love me, will he not reproach me with what he will have sacrificed for my sake ? will he not regret a more brilliant marriage which he might have contracted ? What shall I then reply ?—what shall I do ? I shall weep. Excellent resource ! you will say. Good heavens ! I know that all this can serve no end ; but it has ever been thus ; tears are the only resource left me when this poor heart, so easily chilled, has suffered. Write quickly, and do not fear to scold me should you judge that I am wrong. You know that whatever comes from your pen will be taken in good part.

“ Barras gives assurance that if I marry the general, he will so contrive as to have him appointed to the command of the army of Italy. Yesterday, Bonaparte, speaking of this favour, which already excites murmuring among his fellow

soldiers, though it be as yet only a promise, said to me, 'Think they, then, I have need of their protection to arrive at power? Egregious mistake! They will all be but too happy one day should I condescend to grant them mine. My sword is by my side, and with it I will go far.'

"What say you to this security of success? Is it not a proof of confidence springing from an excess of vanity? A general of brigade protect the heads of government! that, truly, is an event highly probable! I know not how it is, but sometimes his waywardness gains upon me to such a degree, that almost I believe possible whatever this singular man may take it in his head to attempt; and with his imagination, who can calculate what he will not undertake?"

"Here we all regret you, and console ourselves for your prolonged absence only by thinking of you every minute, and by endeavouring to follow you step by step through the beautiful country you are now traversing. Were I sure of meeting you in Italy, I would get married to-morrow, upon condition of following the general; but we might, perhaps, cross each other on the route: thus I deem it more prudent to wait for your reply before taking my determination. Speed, then, your answer—and your return still more."

This is quite in keeping with Josephine's character, as it has already been developed—gentle and elegant, but always self-possessed—weighing all her actions, both with a view to their consequences, and the light in which others would regard them—a character in which delightful natural dispositions were worked up into something highly artificial—something which would have been yet more pleasing than it was, but that the means by which it had been made so were too apparent.

After her marriage with Napoleon, she remained some time in France, but afterwards joined her husband at Milan, where she spent some of the happiest days of her life. Previous to Bonaparte ascending the throne of France, she wrote him the following letter:—

"My Friend,—For the tenth time, perhaps, have I perused your letter, and must confess that the amazement into

which it threw me subsides only to give place to sorrow and apprehension. You persist, then, in the resolution to re-establish the throne of France, and yet not to restore those who were deposed by the revolution, but to seat yourself thereon? What power, you ask—what grandeur—and above all, what advantage—in this design? And, for my part, I venture to reply, what obstacles present themselves to its success—how great the sacrifices which must be made before its accomplishment can be secured—how far beyond calculation the consequences, should it be realized! But let us admit that your purpose does succeed, will your views terminate with the founding of a new empire? Will not your power, opposed, as to a certainty it must be, by the neighbouring states, draw you into a war with them? This will probably end in their ruin. Will not their neighbours, beholding these effects, combine in turn for your destruction? While abroad such is the state of things, at home how numerous the envious and discontented—how many plots to disconcert and conspiracies to punish! Kings will despise you as an upstart, the people will hate you as an usurper, your equals as a tyrant; none will comprehend the utility of your elevation, all will assign it to ambition or to pride. Doubtless, there will not be wanting slaves who will cringe to your power, until backed by another, which they esteem a more formidable influence, they will seek to elevate themselves on your ruin. Fortunate also beyond hope, if steel—if poison!—a wife, a friend, dare not give pause to alarmed imagination on images so dreadful. This brings me to myself, a subject about which my concern would be small indeed if I only were interested. But with the throne, will there not likewise arise the desire of new alliances? Will you not consider it necessary, by new family ties, to provide for the more effectual security of that throne? Oh! whatever such connexions might be, could they prove, like those formed at first in propriety, and which affections the most tender have since consecrated! I stop at this perspective, which fear—must I say love—traces in an appalling futurity. You have alarmed me by your ambitious flight: restore my confidence by your return to moderation.

Like all Cassandras, she was unheeded. Bonaparte had as little of the self-tormenting metaphysics and cold relentings of Macbeth, as Josephine of the masculine spirit of his spouse. The day came which was to realize the dream that had haunted her from her youth. Dr. Memes's picture of her coronation is one of his most fortunate efforts:—

“At eleven precisely, the cavalcade moved from the Tuilleries towards Notre Dame. The imperial carriage, drawn by eight bays, attracted general attention: it had been constructed for the occasion, in a very ingenious manner, the entire panelling being of glass, a circumstance which accounts for the mistake of their majesties having seated themselves like criminals, with their backs to the horses; but where so many omens and predictions have figured, it is surprising that the fact has been omitted. Josephine was the first to discover this error, which she instantly rectified, by lightly assuming the proper position; saying at the same time to her companion, ‘*Mon ami, unless you prefer riding vis-a-vis, this is your seat,*’ pointing to the rich cushion on the right. Napoleon, laughing heartily at his blunder, moved to the place indicated. The procession advanced, attended by ten thousand horsemen, the flower of ‘*Gallie chivalry,*’ who defiled between double lines of infantry, selected from the bravest soldiers, extending about a mile and a half, while more than four hundred thousand spectators filled up every space whence a glance could be obtained. The thunders of innumerable artillery, the acclamations of the assembled multitude, expressed the general enthusiasm; and, as if to light up the gorgeous spectacle, the sun suddenly broke through the mists which till then had hung heavily over the city. The cortége stopped at the archiepiscopal palace, whence a temporary covered gallery, hung with the banners of the sixteen cohorts of the ‘*legion of honour,*’ conducted into the interior of the cathedral and to the throne. To this latter was an ascent of twenty-two semicircular steps covered with blue cloth, gemmed with golden bees, and crowded with the grand officers of the empire. On the throne, itself hung with crimson velvet, under a canopy of the same, appeared Napo-

leon, with Josephine on his left, attended by the princesses of the empire, and on his right, his two brothers, with the arch-chancellor and arch-treasurer. The religious ceremony continued nearly four hours, enlivened by music composed for the occasion chiefly by Pàesiello, and sung by upwards of three hundred performers. The martial band was still more numerous, which executed, in the intervals, marches, afterwards adopted and still used in the armies of France. One of these, composed by Le Seur, for the army destined to invade our own shores, when now performed for the first time, is said to have aroused a visible emotion even in that august assembly. Alas! how cold are the hearts that then beat high with hope! how few, how very few survive of those upon whom the impulse wrought most stirringly! and, from the banks of the Tagus to the streams of the Volga, how varied the clime that settles on their graves! Yet not many years have passed—the story is contemporary history—the grand actor might have been amongst us not an aged man: be the moral, therefore, more impressively ours. Were all such thoughts of this life's greatness absent from Josephine's mind? It would appear not. Napoleon, at that part of the ceremony, stood up, laid his hand upon the imperial crown, —a simple diadem of gold wrought into a chaplet of interwoven oak and laurel,—and placed it on his head. He had even given express directions that Pius should not touch it. Popes had pretended that all crowns were bestowed by them; and perhaps the new emperor dreaded the belief that he had brought his holiness from Rome with reference to these ancient pretensions. He wished, therefore, to demonstrate that the right to reign originated in his own power, and that at his coronation the pope was but the bishop of Rome. Afterwards, Napoleon took the crown destined for the empress, and first putting it for an instant on his own, placed it upon his consort's brow, as she knelt before him on the platform of the throne. The appearance of Josephine was at this moment most touching. Even then she had not forgotten that she was once 'an obscure woman;' tears of deep emotion fell from her eyes; she remained for a space kneeling, with hands

crossed upon her bosom, then slowly and gracefully rising, fixed upon her husband a look of gratitude and tenderness. Napoleon returned the glance. It was a silent but conscious interchange of the hopes, the promises, and the memories of years !”

The ridicule which has attached to the manners of Napoleon's court has been greatly exaggerated, and from evident design, in writings published by renegade courtiers since the restoration. We have Josephine's own authority, whose judgment and taste are indisputable, that the emperor himself, from the first, observed with ease the habitudes of his rank. “Most certainly,” such are her own words when conversing in the little circle of her own exiled court, “most truly do I regard the emperor as a man who has no equal. In camps, at the council board, they find him extraordinary, but in the interior of his palace he ever appeared to me still more remarkable. I confess that, notwithstanding my experience of the world and its usages, the commencement of the imperial forms embarrassed me. The emperor, on the contrary, made a sport, a pleasure of them ; and in all the palace, he alone, beyond contradiction, best understood their observances. Lannes, who enjoyed full licence of speech, made mockery of what he termed ‘the hypocrisies of political worship ;’ but estimating such things at their real value, the emperor regards them under relations more elevated, and conceives that in the eyes of the people they conduce to restore to power the majesty and ascendancy which so many years of anarchy had destroyed. He grants, in truth, that their principal influence springs from the personal qualities of those invested with the supreme rule ; but he maintains that, without equalling or superseding these qualities, ceremonial institutions may supply their place with advantage. In supporting such a system, Napoleon shews himself at least very disinterested ; for who can stand less in need of appliances to impose upon men than one who seems born to govern ? In proof of his argument, he adduces the example of a crowd of princes who have reigned, so to speak, rather seated or lying than standing upright, but whose couch, guarded by

the barriers of etiquette, has been respected like a sanctuary."

Josephine, on all occasions, evinced a strong desire to be permitted to accompany her husband on his military expeditions. On his part, Napoleon loved to indulge this wish; and they differed only as to its being always possible. On one occasion, however, after promising to take the empress, something having occurred to alter his intention, and to require speed, he resolved on departing privately without his companion. Fixing, accordingly, one o'clock in the morning, the hour when she was most likely to be asleep, for the time of setting out, he was just about to step into the carriage, when Josephine, in a most piteous plight, threw herself into his arms. By some means, she had obtained information of what was going forward, and called her women; but impatient of any delay, had got up without waiting for them, and throwing about her the first drapery she could lay hands upon, had rushed down stairs. A moment later, and Napoleon would have been off like lightning; but he could rarely withstand the tears of his wife, so, placing her along the bottom of the carriage, he covered her with his travelling pelisse, giving orders himself about the clothes and proper attendants of the empress.

But we must now revert to the domestic privacy of the empress. "From about midday till half-past two or three o'clock was passed by the empress in her apartments, working, conversing, and reading with her ladies. We have already mentioned how beautifully Josephine embroidered, and this accomplishment continued to be her chief amusement, much of the most splendid furniture in the various palaces being covered with pieces executed by her own hand, with the assistance of her ladies. While the rest were at work, one of the ladies, permanently appointed to the office of reader, read aloud at such times as conversation was not preferred. When any literary production gave more than usual pleasure, it was immediately begun from the commencement, and perused a second time. The volumes selected were interesting but useful books, from the standard writers, and

all new publications of repute. Works of taste and imagination constituted, of course, a large portion of these public readings; novels, however, unless in particular instances, were excluded. Napoleon, indeed, disliked to see novels any where about his palaces; and traversing the antechambers, if he found any of his attendants reading, he seldom failed to examine the book, and if a novel, condemned it to the flames without mercy. The individual, too, was sure of a lecture, which usually began with the question,—‘So, you could find no better reading than that?’ While the empress and her ladies were engaged as described, the emperor was in the habit of looking in upon the fair party at intervals throughout the morning. On these occasions, he is described as being extremely amiable, amusing, and in high spirits; for he rarely visited the saloon in the morning unless when in good humour, or, in his own phrase, ‘when things went well.’ Josephine, too, though more rarely, would venture into his cabinet; but when he required her presence for any conference of importance, Napoleon knocked at the little door of private communication. The empress joyfully obeyed the signal; and these interviews, generally taking place in the evening, were often continued so long, that on returning she found all her ladies asleep.”

A favourite amusement of Josephine and Napoleon was a game called “prisoners”—the same as what our schoolboys call “French and English,” or “Deals.” There is something very striking in the account of the last opportunity they had of indulging in this relaxation:—“The interval between the 15th of August and the 27th of September, when the interview at Erfurth took place, was passed chiefly at St. Cloud, and might nearly be called the last of Josephine’s happiness in Napoleon’s society. Only a few days before his departure, Josephine and Napoleon, with their usual familiars, played a final game at the favourite amusement of ‘prisoners.’ It was dark night before the party finished, and footmen with torches were in attendance, to give light to the players. The effect could not have been without interest—the blaze of the torches now throwing bold, broad, and rich illumination upon

the illustrious group as they assembled in front of the chateau, previous to each run, again flinging scattered and flickering lights upon the lawn, the trees, flowers, and rich dresses of the ladies, as the torch-bearers dispersed, following irregularly the course of the runners. How closely resembling the lives of some of the noblest there,—this crossing, commingling, disappearing, sometimes in light, anon in darkness; here all starting away amid brightness and expectation—there, a figure outstripping all others, only to be lost in gloom! Napoleon, as usual, fell, though only once, as he was running for Josephine. Being thus taken captive, he was placed in *ban*, which he broke as soon as he recovered breath, set again to running, and released the empress amid loud huzzas from his own, and shouts of ‘fair play’ from the opposite party. Thus ended the last repetition of youthful sports.”

From what we have seen of the domestic life of Napoleon and Josephine, no doubt can be entertained of his attachment to that lady. But his mind was constantly haunted by dreams of ambition. He panted for an heir, and wished that the mother should be eminently illustrious in point of birth, so that mankind might be inspired with respect both for himself and his progeny. Accordingly, in an evil hour, he pitched on a daughter of the emperor of Austria, and resolved on divorcing a consort whose marriage had been “secretly blessed by the pope,” who had been crowned by his holiness, who had been the wife of Napoleon during fourteen whole years, and who could not be separated from him without a breach of his own express law, prohibiting every thing of this kind in the imperial family.

No sooner was this design resolved upon, than the necessity for communicating the painful fact to Josephine became apparent. The 30th of November, 1809, arrived, which Napoleon appears to have destined for declaring his final determination to Josephine. She had wept all day; they were to dine together as usual, and, to conceal her tears, the empress wore a large white hat, fastened under the chin, which, with its deep front, shaded the whole of the upper part of the face. Napoleon, also, had shewn marks of the strongest

agitation ; he scarcely spoke to any one, but, with arms folded, continued at intervals to pace his library alone ; from time to time a convulsive movement, attended with a hectic flush, passed for an instant across his features ; and at table, when he raised his eye, it was only to look by stealth upon the empress with an expression of the deepest regret. The dinner was removed untouched—neither tasted a morsel ; and the only use to which Napoleon turned his knife was to strike mechanically upon the edge of his glass, which he appeared to do unconsciously, and like one whose thoughts were painfully pre-occupied. Every thing during this sad repast seemed to presage the impending catastrophe. The officers of the court, even, who were in attendance, stood in motionless expectancy, like men who look upon a sight they feel portends evil, though what they know not ; not a sound was heard beyond the noise of placing and removing the untasted viands, and the monotonous tinkling already noticed ; for the emperor spoke only once to ask a question, without giving any attention to the reply. “ We dined together as usual,” says Josephine ; “ I struggled with my tears, which, notwithstanding every effort, overflowed from my eyes ; I uttered not a single word during that sorrowful meal, and he broke silence but once, to ask an attendant about the weather. My sunshine, I saw, had passed away ; the storm burst quickly. Directly after coffee, Bonaparte dismissed every one, and I remained alone with him. The evident change in Bonaparte’s domestic arrangements, which on this day first took place, seemed to indicate to Josephine that her cares were no longer indispensable to the happiness of her husband. She had risen as usual from the table with Napoleon, whom she slowly followed into the saloon, and with a handkerchief pressed upon her mouth, to restrain the sobbing which, though inaudible, shook her whole frame. Recovering, by an effort, her self-command, Josephine prepared to pour out the coffee, when Napoleon, advancing to the page, performed the office for himself, casting upon her a regard remarked even by the attendants, and which seemed to fall with stunning import, for she remained as if stupified. The emperor having drank,

returned the cup to the page, and by a sign indicated his wish to be alone, shutting with his own hand the door of the saloon. In the dining-room, separated by this door, there remained only the count de Beaumont, chief chamberlain, who continued to walk about in silence, and the favourite personal attendant of the emperor, both expecting some terrible event—an apprehension which was but too speedily confirmed by loud screams from the saloon.

We know, from Josephine's own words, what passed during this secret interview. "I watched in the changing expression of his countenance, that struggle which was in his soul. At length, his features settled into stern resolve. I saw that my hour was come. His whole frame trembled; he approached, and I felt a shuddering horror come over me. He took my hand, placed it upon his heart, gazed upon me for a moment, then pronounced these fearful words,—'Josephine! my excellent Josephine! thou knowest if I have loved thee! To thee—to thee alone do I owe the only moments of happiness which I have enjoyed in this world. Josephine! my destiny overmasters my will. My dearest affections must be silent before the interests of France!'—'Say no more,' I had still strength sufficient to reply: 'I was prepared for this, but the blow is not less mortal.' More I could not utter; I cannot tell what passed within me. I believe my screams were loud. I thought reason had fled. I became unconscious of every thing; and, on returning to my senses, found I had been carried to my chamber.

When Josephine thus fainted, Napoleon hastily opened the door of the saloon, and called to the two individuals who remained in the dining-room. The opening of the door allowed them to see the empress on the floor, insensible, yet still speaking in broken murmurs—"Oh, no! you cannot surely do it!—you would not kill me!" M. de Beaumont entered on a sign from his master, and lifted in his arms the hapless Josephine, now perfectly unconscious of all that was passing. The emperor himself, taking a taper from the chimney-piece, lighted the way through a dark passage, whence there was a private staircase to the empress's sleeping-room.

At first, he had merely said that she had had a nervous attack; but in his increasing agitation allowed some expressions to escape, whence the count first clearly perceived the nature of Josephine's calamity. When they had thus attained the private staircase, it appeared too steep and narrow for M. de Beaumont, unassisted, to attempt to bear the empress down with safety. Napoleon then called the keeper of the portfolio, whose duty it was to be in constant attendance at the door of the cabinet, which also opened upon the corridor. Giving the taper to this attendant, and directing him to precede, the emperor himself supported Josephine's limbs; and, descending last, the party thus attained the door of her bedroom. Here Napoleon dismissed both his companions, and laying the empress on the bed, rang for her women, who, on entering, found him hanging over her, with an expression of the deepest anxiety.

On the 16th of the following December, Napoleon assembled all the members of the senate, including the kings of Westphalia and Naples, the grand admiral, the prince viceroi of Italy, the arch-chancellor of state, the prince vice-constable, &c. After the usual ceremonies, a project of a *Sénatus Consultum* was read, respecting a dissolution of the marriage between the emperor Napoleon and the empress Josephine. This deed of separation required by the two high contracting parties themselves, and approved of by a family council, at which all the princes and princesses of the imperial family then at Paris had assisted, received, on the same day, the assent of the senate, after having been duly examined by a special commission. Jean-Jacques Régis Cambacérès, prince arch-chancellor of the empire, then stated, that, on the preceding day, he had visited the palace of the Tuilleries, attended by Michael Louis Etienne Regnault de St. Jean d'Angely, count of the empire, minister of state, and secretary of state to the imperial family. On being introduced to the grand cabinet of the emperor, he there found his majesty the emperor and king, with her majesty the empress, attended by their majesties the kings of Holland, Westphalia, and Naples.

His imperial majesty then addressed him in a speech in which he stated as follows:—"The politics of my monarchy, the interests and the wants of my people, which have constantly guided all my actions, require that after me I should leave children, inheritors of my love for my people, and of that throne on which Providence has placed me. Notwithstanding this, for several years past I have lost the hope of having children by my marriage with my well-beloved consort, the empress Josephine. This circumstance alone induces me to sacrifice the sweetest affections of my heart, in order to attend to nothing but the good of the state; and with this view I now wish the dissolution of my marriage. Arrived at the age of forty years, I may indulge the hope of living long enough to educate, in my own views and sentiments, the children which it may please Providence to give me. God only knows how much such a resolution has cost my heart; but there is no sacrifice beyond my courage, when it is proved to me to be necessary to the welfare of France."

The empress-queen then spoke as follows:—"By the permission of our dear and august consort I ought to declare, that not preserving any hope of having children, which may fulfil the objects of his policy and the interests of France, I am pleased to afford him the greatest proof of attachment and devotion which has ever been given on earth. I possess all from his bounty; it was his hand which crowned me, and seated me on a throne, and I have received nothing but proofs of affection and love from the French people. I think I prove myself grateful in consenting to the dissolution of a marriage which heretofore was an obstacle to the welfare of France, by depriving it of the happiness of being one day governed by the descendants of a great man, evidently raised up by Providence to efface the evils of a terrible revolution, and to re-establish the altar, the throne, and social order. But the dissolution of my marriage will in no degree change the sentiments of my heart. The emperor will ever find in me his best friend. I know how much this act, demanded by policy and by interests of a high nature, has effected my heart; but both of us exult in the sacrifice which we make for the

good of the country." The instrument for dissolving the marriage was then signed by the following personages:—Napoleon, Josephine, Madame, (the mother of Bonaparte) Louis, Jerome Napoleon, Joachim Napoleon, Eugene Napoleon, Julie, Hortense, Catherine, Pauline, Caroline.

Josephine now withdrew from the palace of the Tuilleries, and retired once more to Malmaison, where she was visited daily by Bonaparte until the period of his nuptials.

Henceforward, Josephine's life was passed alternately at Malmaison and Navarre, and, gliding away in an equal tenor of benevolent exertion and elegant employment, offers but few incidents. A description of one day is the account of all. The villa of Malmaison, to which she first retired, from its vicinity to Paris, might be regarded as her residence of ceremony. Here she received the visits, almost the homage, of the members of the court of Napoleon and Maria Louisa; for it was quickly discovered that, however unpleasant they might be to her new rival, such visits were recommendations to the emperor's favour. A little after nine, these receptions took place; and from the visitors of the morning were retained, or previously invited, some ten or twelve guests to breakfast at eleven. From the personages present being always among the most distinguished in Parisian society, and appearing only in uniform or official costume, these morning parties were equally agreeable and brilliant. After breakfast, the empress adjourned to the saloon, where she conversed for about an hour, or walked in the delightful gallery adjoining, which contained many of the masterpieces of painting and sculpture. Of these, a few were ancient, but the greater number were the works of living artists, the most distinguished of whom were not without obligations to the patronage of Josephine; and while Gros, Girodet, Guerin, with their pencils, Spontini, Mehul, Paer, Boieldieu, with their voice or lyre, Fontanes, Arnault, Andrien, Lemereier, with their pen or conversation, and Canova with his chisel, adorned the gallery or the parties of Malmaison, they ranked among the personal friends of the mistress of the retreat. The arrival of the carriages was the signal for the departure of the morn-

ing visitors; and after a drive of a couple of hours in the park, the empress and her suite retired to dress for dinner, to which never less than from twelve to fifteen strangers sat down. The evening passed in amusement, conversation, and music, and was always very gay, owing to the number of visitors from Paris. At eleven, tea, ices, and sweetmeats were served; and at midnight, the empress retired. The apartments in which these re-unions took place were elegant and spacious, the furniture being covered with needlework on a ground of white silk, wrought by the empress and her ladies; but the residence altogether was small, an inconvenience still further increased through Josephine's veneration of every thing that had been Napoleon's. The apartment which he had occupied remained exactly as he had left it; she would not suffer even a chair to be moved, and indeed very rarely permitted any one to enter, keeping the key herself, and dusting the articles with her own hands. On the table was a volume of history, with the page doubled down where he had finished reading; beside it lay a pen with the ink dried on the point, and a map of the world, on which he was accustomed to point out his plans to those in his confidence, and which still shewed on its surface many marks of his impatience;—these, Josephine would not allow to be touched on any account. By the wall stood Napoleon's camp-bed, without curtains; and above continued to hang such of his arms as he had placed there. On different pieces of furniture were flung various portions of apparel, just as he had used them last; for, among his other extraordinary ways, he had a practice, on retiring to rest, of flinging rather than taking off his clothes, casting down a coat here, a vest there, usually pitching his watch into the bed, and his hat and shoes into the farthest corner of the apartment.

The close of Josephine's life is thus described by Dr. Memes:—“A variety of grievances preyed upon Josephine's spirits, but without producing any appearance of disease till the 4th of May, when she dined at St. Leu with Hortense, Eugene, and the emperor of Russia. On returning to Malmaison, she felt a general uneasiness, which, however, yielded to some

gentie medicine, and the empress resumed her ordinary occupations, though evidently without the usual enjoyment. Some days after, Lord Beverley, with his two sons, breakfasted at Malmaison; and to this nobleman Josephine expressed herself warmly on the generosity of the English, who at that time, she said, alone spoke of Napoleon in a becoming manner. She complained bitterly of the ingratitude of those who, not satisfied with abandoning his falling fortunes; overwhelmed his memory with calumny. On the 10th, Alexander, with several distinguished foreigners, dined at Malmaison. Josephine, despite a headache and cold shiverings, which she laboured to conceal, did the honours of the table; and in the evening attempted even to take a part in a game of 'prisoners!' on the beautiful lawn in front of her residence. To anxious enquiries, however, she continued to reply, with a faint smile, which belied the assurance, 'that she was only fatigued, and would be well to-morrow.' To-morrow came, but Josephine was evidently worse; and for fourteen days, her complaint, without assuming any definite form; or rendering absolute confinement necessary, was frequently attended at night with fainting, and sometimes a wandering of the mind, more from anxiety than delirium. On the 24th, the empress had a slight attack of sore throat, but otherwise rallied so much as to insist on receiving the emperor of Russia and the king of Prussia, who were engaged to dine with her on that day. She did, accordingly, appear, but was forced to retire; and Hortense, who never left Malmaison during her mother's illness, took her place at table. Thenceforward, the disease assumed a most alarming character, exhibiting symptoms of a gangrenous quinsy, and its progress became fearfully rapid. On the morning of the 25th, Alexander returned, and, filled with anxiety at the alteration in Josephine's appearance, requested permission to send his own physician. This the empress declined; but she was attended by her own, and the two physicians attached to the households of her son and daughter. On the night of the 26-27th, a blister was applied between the shoulders, and synapisms to the feet; but though these gave some relief from pain, they effected no impression on the disease.

Still, Josephine, with the same angelic sweetness which had marked her whole life, endeavoured, by concealing her suffering, to soothe the anxiety of her surrounding friends. From the morning of the 26th, she appears to have been perfectly sensible of her danger; for, looking then steadily upon the physician, and perceiving his alarm, she silently pressed his hand in token of consciousness and acquiescence. She even took an interest in her former occupations; and on the 27th, when informed that the celebrated flower-painter, Redoubté, had come to draw two favourite plants in flower, she sent for him, extended her hand, then pushed him gently away, saying, 'You must not catch my sore throat, for next week' (this was on Wednesday) 'I hope to see you advanced with a fresh masterpiece.' The preceding night had passed in a lethargic sleep; and at ten in the morning of the 28th, the physicians, after consulting, deemed it proper to prepare Eugene and Hortense for the final change. From those two cherished beings, whom she had loved so truly, Josephine heard a communication which thus lost all its bitterness. With pious resignation she received the last rites of the Romish faith from the ministration of her grandchildren's preceptor, for the parish clergyman of Ruel happened to be absent. Late on the same day, the emperor Alexander arrived, and was shewn into the chamber of the sufferer, now evidently approaching the goal of all her sorrows. By the bed of their mother knelt Eugene and Hortense, too deeply moved to address the emperor; but at sight of a monarch whom she regarded with gratitude, Josephine seemed to acquire renewed strength, made a sign for all to approach, and said,—'At least I shall die regretted; I have always desired the happiness of France; I did all in my power to contribute to it; and I can say with truth to all of you now present at my last moments, that the first wife of Napoleon never caused a single tear to flow.' These were her last words, for she fell immediately after into a slumber, which continued, uninterrupted by a scarcely audible sigh, till half-past eleven on the morning of the 29th of May, when her gentle spirit calmly passed to a world of love and peace."