

**JOHN ABBOTT**

JOSEPHINE

John Abbott

**Josephine**

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# **John S. C. Abbott**

## **Josephine Makers of History**

### **PREFACE**

Maria Antoinette, Madame Roland, and Josephine are the three most prominent heroines of the French Revolution. The history of their lives necessarily records all the most interesting events of that most fearful tragedy which man has ever enacted. Maria Antoinette beheld the morning dawn of the Revolution; its lurid mid-day sun glared upon Madame Roland; and Josephine beheld the portentous phenomenon fade away. Each of these heroines displayed traits of character worthy of all imitation. No one can read the history of their lives without being ennobled by the contemplation of the fortitude and grandeur of spirit they evinced. To the young ladies of our land we especially commend the Heroines of the French Revolution.

## **Chapter I. Life in Martinique**

**A.D. 1760-A.D. 1775**

### **Martinique**

#### **Its varied beauties**

The island of Martinique emerges in tropical luxuriance from the bosom of the Caribbean Sea. A meridian sun causes the whole land to smile in perennial verdure, and all the gorgeous flowers and luscious fruits of the torrid zone adorn upland and prairie in boundless profusion. Mountains, densely wooded, rear their summits sublimely to the skies, and valleys charm the eye with pictures more beautiful than imagination can create. Ocean breezes ever sweep these hills and vales, and temper the heat of a vertical sun. Slaves, whose dusky limbs are scarcely veiled by the lightest clothing, till the soil, while the white inhabitants, supported by the indolent labor of these unpaid menials, loiter away life in listless leisure and in rustic luxury. Far removed from the dissipating influences of European and American opulence, they dwell in their secluded island in a state of almost patriarchal simplicity.

#### **Birth of Josephine**

#### **Her parents' death**

About the year 1760, a young French officer, Captain Joseph Gaspard Tascher, accompanied his regiment of horse to this island. While here on professional duty, he became attached to a young lady from France, whose parents, formerly opulent, in consequence of the loss of property, had moved to the West Indies to retrieve their fortunes. But little is known respecting Mademoiselle de Sanois, this young lady, who was soon married to M. Tascher. Josephine was the only child born of this union. In consequence of the early death of her mother, she was, while an infant, intrusted to the care of her aunt. Her father soon after died, and the little orphan appears never to have known a father's or a mother's love.

#### **M. Renaudin**

Madame Renaudin, the kind aunt, who now, with maternal affection, took charge of the helpless infant, was a lady of wealth, and of great benevolence of character. Her husband was the owner of several estates, and lived surrounded by all that plain and rustic profusion which characterizes the abode of the wealthy planter. His large possessions, and his energy of character, gave him a wide influence over the island. He was remarkable for his humane treatment of his slaves, and for the successful manner with which he conducted the affairs of his plantations.

## **His kind treatment of his slaves**

### **Gratitude of the slaves**

The general condition of the slaves of Martinique at this time was very deplorable; but on the plantations of M. Renaudin there was as perfect a state of contentment and of happiness as is consistent with the deplorable institution of slavery. The slaves, many of them but recently torn from their homes in Africa, were necessarily ignorant, degraded, and superstitious. They knew nothing of those more elevated and refined enjoyments which the cultivated mind so highly appreciates, but which are so often also connected with the most exquisite suffering. Josephine, in subsequent life, gave a very vivid description of the wretchedness of the slaves in general, and also of the peace and harmony which, in striking contrast, cheered the estates of her uncle. When the days' tasks were done, the negroes, constitutionally light-hearted and merry, gathered around their cabins with songs and dances, often prolonged late into the hours of the night. They had never known any thing better than their present lot. They compared their condition with that of the slaves on the adjoining plantations, and exulted in view of their own enjoyments. M. and Madame Renaudin often visited their cabins, spoke words of kindness to them in their hours of sickness and sorrow, encouraged the formation of pure attachments and honorable marriage among the young, and took a lively interest in their sports. The slaves loved their kind master and mistress most sincerely, and manifested their affection in a thousand simple ways which touched the heart.

### **Josephine a universal favorite**

Josephine imbibed from infancy the spirit of her uncle and aunt. She always spoke to the slaves in tones of kindness, and became a universal favorite with all upon the plantations. She had no playmates but the little negroes and she united with them freely in all their sports. Still, these little ebon children of bondage evidently looked up to Josephine as to a superior being. She was the queen around whom they circled in affectionate homage. The instinctive faculty, which Josephine displayed through life, of winning the most ardent love of all who met her, while, at the same time, she was protected from any undue familiarity, she seems to have possessed even at that early day. The children, who were her companions in all the sports of childhood, were also dutiful subjects ever ready to be obedient to her will.

### **Hospitality of M. Renaudin**

### **Society at his house**

The social position of M. Renaudin, as one of the most opulent and influential gentlemen of Martinique, necessarily attracted to his hospitable residence much refined and cultivated society. Strangers from Europe visiting the island, planters of intellectual tastes, and ladies of polished manners, met a cordial welcome beneath the spacious roof of this abode, where all abundance was to be found. Madame Renaudin had passed her early years in Paris, and her manners were embellished with that elegance and refinement which have given to Parisian society such a world-wide celebrity. There was, at that period, much more intercourse between the mother country and the colonies than at the present day. Thus Josephine, though reared in a provincial home, was accustomed, from infancy,

to associate with gentlemen and ladies who were familiar with the etiquette of the highest rank in society, and whose conversation was intellectual and improving.

### **Early education of Josephine**

#### **Her accomplishments**

It at first view seems difficult to account for the high degree of mental culture which Josephine displayed, when, seated by the side of Napoleon, she was the Empress of France. Her remarks, her letters, her conversational elegance, gave indication of a mind thoroughly furnished with information and trained by severe discipline. And yet, from all the glimpses we can catch of her early education, it would seem that, with the exception of the accomplishments of music, dancing, and drawing, she was left very much to the guidance of her own instinctive tastes. But, like Madame Roland, she was blessed with that peculiar mental constitution, which led her, of her own accord, to treasure up all knowledge which books or conversation brought within her reach. From childhood until the hour of her death, she was ever improving her mind by careful observation and studious reading. She played upon the harp with great skill, and sang with a voice of exquisite melody. She also read with a correctness of elocution and a fervor of feeling which ever attracted admiration. The morning of her childhood was indeed bright and sunny, and her gladdened heart became so habituated to joyousness, that her cheerful spirit seldom failed her even in the darkest days of her calamity. Her passionate love for flowers had interested her deeply in the study of botany, and she also became very skillful in embroidery, that accomplishment which was once deemed an essential part of the education of every lady.

#### **Euphemie**

#### **She becomes Josephine's bosom companion**

Under such influences Josephine became a child of such grace, beauty, and loveliness of character as to attract the attention and the admiration of all who saw her. There was an affectionateness, simplicity, and frankness in her manners which won all hearts. Her most intimate companion in these early years was a young mulatto girl, the daughter of a slave, and report said, with how much truth it is impossible to know, that she was also the daughter of Captain Tascher before his marriage. Her name was Euphemie. She was a year or two older than Josephine, but she attached herself with deathless affection to her patroness; and, though Josephine made her a companion and a confidante, she gradually passed, even in these early years, into the position of a maid of honor, and clung devotedly to her mistress through all the changes of subsequent life. Josephine, at this time secluded from all companionship with young ladies of her own rank and age, made this humble but active-minded and intelligent girl her bosom companion. They rambled together, the youthful mistress and her maid, in perfect harmony. From Josephine's more highly-cultivated mind the lowly-born child derived intellectual stimulus, and thus each day became a more worthy and congenial associate. As years passed on, and Josephine ascended into higher regions of splendor, her humble attendant gradually retired into more obscure positions, though she was ever regarded by her true-hearted mistress with great kindness.



## **Popularity of Josephine**

### **Childhood enjoyment**

### **Characteristic traits**

Josephine was a universal favorite with all the little negro girls of the plantation. They looked up to her as to a protectress whom they loved, and to whom they owed entire homage. She would frequently collect a group of them under the shade of the luxuriant trees of that tropical island, and teach them the dances which she had learned, and also join with them as a partner. She loved to assemble them around her, and listen to those simple negro melodies which penetrate every heart which can feel the power of music. Again, all their voices, in sweet harmony, blended with hers as she taught them the more scientific songs of Europe. She would listen with unaffected interest to their tales of sorrow, and weep with them. Often she interposed in their behalf that their tasks might be lightened, or that a play-day might be allowed them. Thus she was as much beloved and admired in the cabin of the poor negro as she was in her uncle's parlor, where intelligence and refinement were assembled. This same character she displayed through the whole of her career. Josephine upon the plantation and Josephine upon the throne – Josephine surrounded by the sable maidens of Martinique, and Josephine moving in queenly splendor in the palaces of Versailles, with all the courtiers of Europe revolving around her, displayed the same traits of character, and by her unaffected kindness won the hearts alike of the lowly and of the exalted.

### **The fortune-teller**

About this time an occurrence took place which has attracted far more attention than it deserves. Josephine was one day walking under the shade of the trees of the plantation, when she saw a number of negro children gathered around an aged and withered negress, who had great reputation among the slaves as a fortune-teller. Curiosity induced Josephine to draw near the group to hear what the sorceress had to say. The old sibyl, with the cunning which is characteristic of her craft, as soon as she saw Josephine approach, whom she knew perfectly, assumed an air of great agitation, and, seizing her hand violently, gazed with most earnest attention upon the lines traced upon the palm. The little negresses were perfectly awe-stricken by this oracular display. Josephine, however, was only amused, and smiling, said,

"So you discover something very extraordinary in my destiny?"

"Yes!" replied the negress, with an air of great solemnity.

"Is happiness or misfortune to be my lot?" Josephine inquired.

### **Predictions of the sibyl**

The negress again gazed upon her hand, and then replied, "Misfortune;" but, after a moment's pause, she added, "and happiness too."

"You must be careful, my good woman," Josephine rejoined, "not to commit yourself. Your predictions are not very intelligible."

The negress, raising her eyes with an expression of deep mystery to heaven, rejoined, "I am not permitted to render my revelations more clear."

## **Credulity**

In every human heart there is a vein of credulity. The pretended prophetess had now succeeded in fairly arousing the curiosity of Josephine, who eagerly inquired, "What do you read respecting me in futurity? Tell me exactly."

Again the negress, assuming an air of profound solemnity, said, "You will not believe me if I reveal to you your strange destiny."

"Yes, indeed, I assure you that I will," Josephine thoughtlessly replied. "Come, good mother, do tell me what I have to hope and what to fear."

## **More predictions**

"On your own head be it, then. Listen. You will soon be married. That union will not be happy. You will become a widow, and then you will be Queen of France. Some happy years will be yours, but afterward you will die in a hospital, amid civil commotions."

## **Their fulfillment**

The old woman then hurried away. Josephine talked a few moments with the young negroes upon the folly of this pretended fortune-telling, and leaving them, the affair passed from her mind. In subsequent years, when toiling through the vicissitudes of her most eventful life, she recalled the singular coincidence between her destiny and the prediction, and seemed to consider that the negress, with prophetic vision, had traced out her wonderful career.

## **Explanations of the predictions**

### **How fulfilled**

But what is there so extraordinary in this narrative? What maiden ever consulted a fortune-teller without receiving the agreeable announcement that she was to wed beauty, and wealth, and rank? It was known universally, and it was a constant subject of plantation gossip, that the guardians of Josephine were contemplating a match for her with the son of a neighboring planter. The negroes did not think him half worthy of their adored and queenly Josephine. They supposed, however, that the match was settled. The artful woman was therefore compelled to allow Josephine to marry *at first* the undistinguished son of the planter, with whom she could not be happy. She, however, very considerably lets the unworthy husband in a short time die, and then Josephine becomes a queen. This is the old story, which has been repeated to half the maidens in Christendom. It is not very surprising that in this one case it should have happened to prove true.

### **Falsity of the prediction**

But, unfortunately, our prophetess went a little farther, and predicted that Josephine would die in a hospital – implying poverty and abandonment. This part of the prediction proved to be utterly untrue. Josephine, instead of dying in a hospital, died in the beautiful palace of Malmaison. Instead of dying in poverty, she was one of the richest ladies in Europe, receiving an income of some

six hundred thousand dollars a year. The grounds around her palace were embellished with all the attractions, and her apartments furnished with every luxury which opulence could provide. Instead of dying in friendlessness and neglect, the Emperor Alexander of Russia stood at her bed-side; the most illustrious kings and nobles of Europe crowded her court and did her homage. And though she was separated from her husband, she still retained the title of Empress, and was the object of his most sincere affection and esteem.

Thus this prediction, upon which so much stress has been laid, seems to vanish in the air. It surely is not a supernatural event that a young lady, who was told by an aged negress that she would be a queen, happened actually to become one.

### **Contemplated match**

#### **Attachment between Josephine and William**

We have alluded to a contemplated match between Josephine and the son of a neighboring planter. An English family, who had lost property and rank in the convulsions of those times, had sought a retreat in the island of Martinique, and were cultivating an adjoining plantation. In this family there was a very pleasant lad, a son, of nearly the same age with Josephine. The plantations being near to each other, they were often companions and playmates. A strong attachment grew up between them. The parents of William, and the uncle and aunt of Josephine, approved cordially of this attachment; and were desirous that these youthful hearts should be united, as soon as the parties should arrive at mature age. Josephine, in the ingenuous artlessness of her nature, disguised not in the least her strong affection for William. And his attachment to her was deep and enduring. The solitude of their lives peculiarly tended to promote fervor of character.

### **Their separation**

Matters were in this state, when the father of William received an intimation from England that, by returning to his own country, he might, perhaps, regain his lost estates. He immediately prepared to leave the island with his family. The separation was a severe blow to these youthful lovers. They wept, and vowed eternal fidelity.

### **Rousseau throwing stones**

It is not surprising that Josephine should have been in some degree superstitious. The peculiarity of her life upon the plantation – her constant converse with the negroes, whose minds were imbued with all the superstitious notions which they had brought from Africa, united with those which they had found upon the island, tended to foster those feelings. Rousseau, the most popular and universally-read French writer of that day, in his celebrated "Confessions," records with perfect composure that he was one day sitting in a grove, meditating whether his soul would probably be saved or lost. He felt that the question was of the utmost importance. How could he escape from the uncertainty! A supernatural voice seemed to suggest an appeal to a singular kind of augury. "I will," said he, "throw this stone at that tree. If I hit the tree, it shall be a sign that my soul is to be saved. If I miss it, it shall indicate that I am to be lost." He selected a large tree, took the precaution of getting very near to it, and threw his stone plump against the trunk. "After that," says the philosopher, "I never again had a doubt respecting my salvation."

### **Josephine's superstition**

Josephine resorted to the same kind of augury to ascertain if William, who had become a student in the University at Oxford, still remained faithful to her. She not unfrequently attempted to beguile a weary hour in throwing pebbles at the trees, that she might divine whether William were then thinking of her. Months, however, passed away, and she received no tidings from him. Though she had often written, her letters remained unanswered. Her feelings were the more deeply wounded, since there were other friends upon the island with whom he kept up a correspondence; but Josephine never received even a message through them.

One day, as she was pensively rambling in a grove, where she had often walked with her absent lover, she found carved upon a tree the names of William and Josephine. She knew well by whose hand they had been cut, and, entirely overcome with emotion, she sat down and wept bitterly. With the point of a knife, and with a trembling hand, she inscribed in the bark these words, peculiarly characteristic of her depth of feeling, and of the gentleness of her spirit: "Unhappy William! thou hast forgotten me!"

### **Mutual fidelity**

### **Deception of friends**

William, however, had not forgotten her. Again and again he had written in terms of the most ardent affection. But the friends of Josephine, meeting with an opportunity for a match for her which they deemed far more advantageous, had destroyed these communications, and also had prevented any of her letters from reaching the hand of William. Thus each, while cherishing the truest affection, deemed the other faithless.

## **Chapter II.**

# **The Marriage of Josephine**

**A.D. 1775-A.D. 1785**

**Alexander de Beauharnais**

### **His character**

Josephine was about fourteen years of age when she was separated from William. A year passed away, during which she received not a line from her absent friend. About this time a gentleman from France visited her uncle upon business of great importance. Viscount Alexander de Beauharnais was a fashionable and gallant young man, about thirty years of age, possessing much conversational ease and grace of manner, and accustomed to the most polished society of the French metropolis. He held a commission in the army, and had already signalized himself by several acts of bravery. His sympathies had been strongly aroused by the struggle of the American colonists with the mother country, and he had already aided the colonists both with his sword and his purse.

### **A new suitor**

Several large and valuable estates in Martinique, adjoining the plantation of M. Renaudin, had fallen by inheritance to this young officer and his brother, the Marquis of Beauharnais. He visited Martinique to secure the proof of his title to these estates. M. Renaudin held some of these plantations on lease. In the transaction of this business, Beauharnais spent much time at the mansion of M. Renaudin. He, of course, saw much of the beautiful Josephine, and was fascinated with her grace, and her mental and physical loveliness.

### **Motives for the marriage**

The uncle and aunt of Josephine were delighted to perceive the interest which their niece had awakened in the bosom of the interesting stranger. His graceful figure, his accomplished person, his military celebrity, his social rank, and his large fortune, all conspired to dazzle their eyes, and to lead them to do every thing in their power to promote a match apparently so eligible. The ambition of M. Renaudin was moved at the thought of conferring upon his niece, the prospective heiress of his own fortune, an estate so magnificent as the united inheritance. Josephine, however, had not yet forgotten William, and, though interested in her uncle's guest, for some time allowed no emotion of love to flow out toward him.

### **The announcement**

One morning Josephine was sitting in the library in pensive musings, when her uncle came into the room to open to her the subject of her contemplated marriage with M. Beauharnais. Josephine

was thunderstruck at the communication, for, according to the invariable custom of the times, she knew that she could have but little voice in the choice of a partner for life. For a short time she listened in silence to his proposals, and then said, with tears in her eyes,

### **Feelings of Josephine**

"Dear uncle, I implore you to remember that my affections are fixed upon William. I have been solemnly promised to him."

"That is utterly impossible, my child," her uncle replied. "Circumstances are changed. All our hopes are centered in you. You must obey our wishes."

"And why," said she, "have you changed your intentions in reference to William?"

Her uncle replied: "You will receive by inheritance all my estate. M. Beauharnais possesses the rich estates adjoining. Your union unites the property. M. Beauharnais is every thing which can be desired in a husband. Besides, William appears to have forgotten you."

To this last remark Josephine could make no reply. She looked sadly upon the floor and was silent. It is said that her uncle had then in his possession several letters which William had written her, replete with the most earnest spirit of constancy and affection.

### **Zeal of M. Beauharnais**

### **The engagement**

Josephine, but fifteen years of age, could not, under these circumstances, resist the influences now brought to bear upon her. M. Beauharnais was a gentleman of fascinating accomplishments. The reluctance of Josephine to become his bride but stimulated his zeal to obtain her. In the seclusion of the plantation, and far removed from other society, she was necessarily with him nearly at all hours. They read together, rode on horseback side by side, rambled in the groves in pleasant companionship. They floated by moonlight upon the water, breathing the balmy air of that delicious clime, and uniting their voices in song, the measure being timed with the dipping of the oars by the negroes. The friends of Josephine were importunate for the match. At last, reluctantly she gave her consent. Having done this, she allowed her affections, unrestrained, to repose upon her betrothed. Though her heart still clung to William, she thought that he had found other friends in England, in whose pleasant companionship he had lost all remembrance of the island maiden who had won his early love.

Alexander Beauharnais, soon after his engagement to Josephine, embarked for France. Arrangements had been made for Josephine, in the course of a few months, to follow him, upon a visit to a relative in Paris, and there the nuptials were to be consummated. Josephine was now fifteen years of age. She was attached to Beauharnais, but not with that fervor of feeling which had previously agitated her heart. She often thought of William and spoke of him, and at times had misgivings lest there might be some explanation of his silence. But months had passed on, and she had received no letter or message from him.

## **Departure from Martinique**

### **Parting scenes**

At length the hour for her departure from the island arrived. With tearful eyes and a saddened heart she left the land of her birth, and the scenes endeared to her by all the recollections of childhood. Groups of negroes, from the tottering infant to the aged man of gray hairs, surrounded her with weeping and loud lamentation. Josephine hastened on board, the ship got under way, and soon the island of Martinique disappeared beneath the watery horizon. Josephine sat upon the deck in perfect silence, watching the dim outline of her beloved home till it was lost to sight. Her young heart was full of anxiety, of tenderness, and of regrets. Little, however, could she imagine the career of strange vicissitudes upon which she was about to enter.

### **Josephine's arrival in France**

### **Her interview with William**

### **Explanation of William**

The voyage was long and tempestuous. Storms pursued them all the way. At one time the ship was dismasted and came near foundering. At length the welcome cry of "Land" was heard, and Josephine, an unknown orphan child of fifteen, placed her feet upon the shores of France, that country over which she was soon to reign the most renowned empress. She hastened to Fontainebleau, and was there met by Alexander Beauharnais. He received her with great fondness, and was assiduous in bestowing upon her the most flattering attentions. But Josephine had hardly arrived at Fontainebleau before she heard that William and his father were also residing at that place. Her whole frame trembled like an aspen leaf, and her heart sunk within her as she received the intelligence. All her long-cherished affection for the companion of her childhood was revived, and still she knew not but that William was faithless. He, however, immediately called, with his father, to see her. The interview was most embarrassing, for each loved the other intensely, and each had reason to believe that the other had proved untrue. The next day William called alone; Josephine, the betrothed bride of Beauharnais, prudently declined seeing him. He then wrote her a letter, which he bribed a servant to place in her hands, full of protestations of love, stating how he had written to her, and passionately inquiring why she turned so coldly from him.

### **Distress of Josephine**

Josephine read the letter with a bursting heart. She now saw how she had been deceived. She now was convinced that William had proved faithful to her, notwithstanding he had so much reason to believe that she had been untrue to him. But what could she do? She was but fifteen years of age. She was surrounded only by those who were determined that she should marry Alexander Beauharnais. She was told that the friends of William had decided unalterably that he should marry an English heiress, and that the fortunes of his father's family were dependent upon that alliance. The servant

who had been the bearer of William's epistle was dismissed, and the other servants were commanded not to allow him to enter the house.

### **Josephine retires to a convent**

The agitation of Josephine's heart was such that for some time she was unable to leave her bed. She entreated her friends to allow her for a few months to retire to a convent, that she might, in solitary thought and prayer, regain composure. Her friends consented to this arrangement, and she took refuge in the convent at Panthemont. Here she spent a few months in inexpressible gloom. William made many unavailing efforts to obtain an interview, and at last, in despair, reluctantly received the wealthy bride, through whom he secured an immense inheritance, and with whom he passed an unloving life.

### **She marries the Viscount Beauharnais**

The Viscount Beauharnais often called to see her, and was permitted to converse with her at the gate of her window. In the simplicity of her heart, she told her friends at the convent of her attachment for William; how they had been reared together, and how they had loved from childhood. She felt that it was a cruel fate which separated them, but a fate before which each must inevitably bow. At last she calmly made up her mind to comply with the wishes of her friends, and to surrender herself to the Viscount Beauharnais. There was much in the person and character of Beauharnais to render him very attractive, and she soon became sincerely, though never passionately, attached to him.

### **Fashionable life**

Josephine was sixteen years of age when she was married. Her social position was in the midst of the most expensive and fashionable society of Paris. She was immediately involved in all the excitements of parties, and balls, and gorgeous entertainments. Her beauty, her grace, her amiability, and her peculiarly musical voice, which fell like a charm upon every ear, excited great admiration and not a little envy. It was a dangerous scene into which to introduce the artless and inexperienced Creole girl, and she was not a little dazzled by the splendor with which she was surrounded. Every thing that could minister to convenience, or that could gratify taste, was lavished profusely around her. For a time she was bewildered by the novelty of her situation. But soon she became weary of the heartless pageantry of fashionable life, and sighed for the tranquil enjoyments of her island home.

### **Josephine is introduced at court**

### **Maria Antoinette and Josephine**

Her husband, proud of her beauty and accomplishments, introduced her at court. Maria Antoinette, who had then just ascended the throne, and was in the brilliance of her youth, and beauty, and early popularity, was charmed with the West Indian bride, and received her without the formality of a public presentation. When these two young brides met in the regal palace of Versailles – the one a daughter of Maria Theresa and a descendant of the Cæsars, who had come from the court of Austria to be not only the queen, but the brightest ornament of the court of France – the other the child of a planter, born upon an obscure island, reared in the midst of negresses, as almost her only companions – little did they imagine that Maria Antoinette was to go down, down, down to the lowest



state of ignominy and woe, while Josephine was to ascend to more and more exalted stations, until she should sit upon a throne more glorious than the Cæsars ever knew.

## **French philosophy**

### **Infidelity of Beauharnais**

French philosophy had at this time undermined the religion of Jesus Christ. All that is sacred in the domestic relations was withering beneath the blight of infidelity. Beauharnais, a man of fashion and of the world, had imbibed, to the full, the sentiments which disgraced the age. Marriage was deemed a partnership, to be formed or dissolved at pleasure. Fidelity to the nuptial tie was the jest of philosophers and witlings. Josephine had soon the mortification of seeing a proud, beautiful, and artful woman taking her place, and openly and triumphantly claiming the attentions and the affections of her husband. This woman, high in rank, loved to torture her poor victim. "Your dear Alexander," she said to Josephine, "daily lavishes upon others the tribute of attachment which you think he reserves solely for you." She could not bear to see the beautiful and virtuous Josephine happy, as the honored wife of her guilty lover, and she resolved, if possible, to sow the seeds of jealousy so effectually between them as to secure a separation.

### **Birth of a daughter**

In the year 1780 Josephine gave birth to her daughter Hortense. This event seemed for a time to draw back the wandering affections of Beauharnais. He was really proud of his wife. He admired her beauty and her grace. He doted upon his infant daughter. But he was an infidel. He recognized no law of God, commanding purity of heart and life, and he contended that Josephine had no right to complain, as long as he treated her kindly, if he did indulge in the waywardness of passion.

### **Birth of a son**

The path of Josephine was now, indeed, shrouded in gloom, and each day seemed to grow darker and darker. Hortense became her idol and her only comfort. Her husband lavished upon her those luxuries which his wealth enabled him to grant. He was kind to her in words and in all the ordinary courtesies of intercourse. But Josephine's heart was well-nigh broken. A few years of conflict passed slowly away, when she gave birth, in the year 1783, to her son Eugene. In the society of her children the unhappy mother found now her only solace.

### **An arch deceiver**

While the Viscount Beauharnais was ready to defend his own conduct, he was by no means willing that his wife should govern herself by the same principles of fashionable philosophy. The code infidel is got up for the especial benefit of dissolute *men*; their *wives* must be governed by another code. The artful woman, who was the prime agent in these difficulties, affected great sympathy with Josephine in her sorrows, protested her own entire innocence, but assured her that M. Beauharnais was an ingrate, entirely unworthy of her affections. She deceived Josephine, hoarded up the confidence of her stricken heart, and conversed with her about *William*, the memory of whose faithful love now came with new freshness to the disconsolate wife.

Josephine, lured by her, wrote a letter to her friends in Martinique, in which she imprudently said, "Were it not for my children, I should without a pang, renounce France forever. My duty requires me to forget William; and yet if *we* had been united together, I should not to-day have been troubling you with my griefs."

### **Josephine betrayed**

### **Application for a divorce**

### **Josephine triumphant**

### **Visit to Versailles**

The woman who instigated her to write this letter was infamous enough to obtain it by stealth and show it to Beauharnais. His jealousy and indignation were immediately aroused to the highest pitch. He was led by this malicious deceiver to believe that Josephine had obtained secret interviews with William, and the notoriously unfaithful husband was exasperated to the highest degree at the very suspicion of the want of fidelity in his wife. He reproached her in language of the utmost severity, took Eugene from her, and resolved to endeavor, by legal process, to obtain an entire divorce. She implored him, for the sake of her children, not to proclaim their difficulties to the world. He, however, reckless of consequences, made application to the courts for the annulment of the matrimonial bond. Josephine was now compelled to defend her own character. She again retired with Hortense to the convent, and there, through dreary months of solitude, and silence, and dejection, awaited the result of the trial upon which her reputation as a virtuous woman was staked. The decree of the court was triumphantly in her favor, and Josephine returned to her friends to receive their congratulations, but impressed with the conviction that earth had no longer a joy in store for her. Her friends did all in their power to cheer her desponding spirit; but the wound she had received was too deep to be speedily healed. One day her friends, to divert her mind from brooding over irreparable sorrows, took her, almost by violence, to Versailles. They passed over the enchanting grounds, and through the gorgeously-furnished apartments of the Great and Little Trianon, the favorite haunts of Maria Antoinette. Here the beautiful Queen of France was accustomed to lay aside the pageantry of royalty, and to enjoy, without restraint, the society of those who were dear to her. Days of darkness and trouble had already begun to darken around her path. As Josephine was looking at some of the works of art, she was greatly surprised at the entrance of the queen, surrounded by several ladies of her court. Maria Antoinette immediately recognized Josephine, and with that air of affability and kindness which ever characterized her conduct, she approached her, and, with one of her winning smiles, said, "Madame Beauharnais, I am very happy to see you at the two Trianons. You well know how to appreciate their beauties. I should be much pleased to learn what objects you consider most interesting. I shall always receive you with pleasure."

## **Interview with Maria Antoinette**

### **Kindness of the queen**

These words from the queen were an unspeakable solace to Josephine. Her afflicted heart needed the consolation. The queen was acquainted with her trials, and thus nobly assured her of her sympathy and her confidence. In a few days Maria Antoinette invited Josephine to a private interview. She addressed her in words of the utmost kindness, promised to watch over the interests of her son, and at the same time, as a mark of her especial regard, she took from her neck an antique ornament of precious stones, and passed it over the neck of Josephine. The king also himself came in at the interview, for his heart had been softened by sorrow, and addressed words of consolation to the injured and discarded wife.

Josephine now received letters from Martinique earnestly entreating her to return, with her children, to the home of her childhood. World-weary, she immediately resolved to accept the invitation. But the thought of crossing the wide ocean, and leaving her son Eugene behind, was a severe pang to a mother's heart. Eugene had been taken from her and sent to a boarding-school. Josephine felt so deeply the pang of separation from her beloved child, that she obtained an interview with M. Beauharnais, and implored him to allow her to take Eugene with her. He gave a cold and positive refusal.

## **Josephine embarks for Martinique**

### **Hours of despondency**

A few days after this, Josephine, cruelly separated from her husband and bereaved of her son, embarked with Hortense for Martinique. She strove to maintain that aspect of cheerfulness and of dignity which an injured but innocent woman is entitled to exhibit. When dark hours of despondency overshadowed her, she tried to console herself with the beautiful thought of Plautus: "If we support adversity with courage, we shall have a keener relish for returning prosperity." It does not appear that she had any refuge in the consolations of religion. She had a vague and general idea of the goodness of a superintending Providence, but she was apparently a stranger to those warm and glowing revelations of Christianity which introduce us to a sympathizing Savior, a guiding and consoling Spirit, a loving and forgiving Father. Could she then, by faith, have reposed her aching head upon the bosom of her heavenly Father, she might have found a solace such as nothing else could confer. But at this time nearly every mind in France was more or less darkened by the glooms of infidelity.

## **Josephine arrives at Martinique**

### **Her kind reception**

The winds soon drove her frail bark across the Atlantic, and Josephine, pale and sorrow-stricken, was clasped in the arms and folded to the hearts of those who truly loved her. The affectionate negroes gathered around her, with loud demonstrations of their sympathy and their joy in again

meeting their mistress. Here, amid the quiet scenes endeared to her by the recollections of childhood, she found a temporary respite from those storms by which she had been so severely tossed upon life's wild and tempestuous ocean.

## **Chapter III.**

### **Arrest of M. Beauharnais and Josephine**

**A.D. 1786-A.D. 1793**

#### **Sadness of Josephine**

Josephine remained in Martinique three years. She passed her time in tranquil sadness, engaged in reading, in educating Hortense, and in unwearied acts of kindness to those around her. Like all noble minds, she had a great fondness for the beauties of nature. The luxuriant groves of the tropics, the serene skies which overarched her head, the gentle zephyrs which breathed through orange groves, all were congenial with her pensive spirit. The thought of Eugene, her beautiful boy, so far from her, preyed deeply upon her heart. Often she retired alone to some of those lonely walks which she loved so well, and wept over her alienated husband and her lost child.

#### **Dissipation of Beauharnais**

#### **Repentance of Beauharnais**

#### **Josephine returns to France**

M. Beauharnais surrendered himself for a time, without restraint, to every indulgence. He tried, in the society of sin and shame, to forget his wife and his absent daughter. He, however, soon found that no friend can take the place of a virtuous and an affectionate wife. The memory of Josephine's gentleness, and tenderness, and love came flooding back upon his heart. He became fully convinced of his injustice to her, and earnestly desired to have her restored again to him and to his home. He sent communications to Josephine, expressive of his deep regret for the past, promising amendment for the future, assuring her of his high appreciation of her elevated and honorable character, and imploring her to return with Hortense, thus to reunite the divided and sorrow-stricken household. It was indeed a gratification to Josephine to receive from her husband the acknowledgment that she had never ceased to deserve his confidence. The thought of again pressing Eugene to her bosom filled a mother's heart with rapture. Still, the griefs which had weighed upon her were so heavy, that she confessed to her friends that, were it not for the love which she bore Eugene, she would greatly prefer to spend the remnant of her days upon her favorite island. Her friends did every thing in their power to dissuade her from leaving Martinique. But a mother's undying love triumphed, and again she embarked for France.

#### **The jewels**

In subsequent years, when surrounded by all the splendors of royalty, she related to some of the ladies of her court, with that unaffected simplicity which ever marked her character, the following

incident, which occurred during this voyage. The ladies were admiring some brilliant jewels which were spread out before them. Josephine said to them, "My young friends, believe me, splendor does not constitute happiness. I at one time received greater enjoyment from the gift of a pair of old shoes than all these diamonds have ever afforded me." The curiosity of her auditors was, of course, greatly excited, and they entreated her to explain her meaning.

### **Anecdote of the old shoes**

#### **Hortense without shoes**

#### **The kind old sailor**

#### **The shoes made**

"Yes, young ladies," Josephine continued, "of all the presents I ever received, the one which gave me the greatest pleasure was *a pair of old shoes, and those, too, of coarse leather*. When I last returned to France from Martinique, having separated from my first husband, I was far from rich. The passage-money exhausted my resources, and it was not without difficulty that I obtained the indispensable requisites for our voyage. Hortense, obliging and lively, performing with much agility the dances of the negroes, and singing their songs with surprising correctness, greatly amused the sailors, who, from being her constant play-fellows, had become her favorite society. An old sailor became particularly attached to the child, and she doted upon the old man. What with running, leaping, and walking, my daughter's slight shoes were fairly worn out. Knowing that she had not another pair, and fearing I would forbid her going upon deck, should this defect in her attire be discovered, Hortense carefully concealed the disaster. One day I experienced the distress of seeing her return from the deck leaving every foot-mark in blood. When examining how matters stood, I found her shoes literally in tatters, and her feet dreadfully torn by a nail. We were as yet not more than half way across the ocean, and it seemed impossible to procure another pair of shoes. I felt quite overcome at the idea of the sorrow my poor Hortense would suffer, as also at the danger to which her health might be exposed by confinement in my miserable little cabin. At this moment our good friend, the old sailor, entered and inquired the cause of our distress. Hortense, sobbing all the while, eagerly informed him that she could no more go upon deck, for her shoes were worn out, and mamma had no others to give her. 'Nonsense,' said the worthy seaman, 'is that all? I have an old pair somewhere in my chest; I will go and seek them. You, madam, can cut them to shape, and I will splice them up as well as need be.' Without waiting for a reply, away hastened the kind sailor in search of his old shoes; these he soon after brought to us with a triumphant air, and they were received by Hortense with demonstrations of the most lively joy. We set to work with all zeal, and before the day closed my daughter could resume her delightful duties of supplying their evening's diversion to the crew. I again repeat, never was present received with greater thankfulness. It has since often been matter of self-reproach that I did not particularly inquire into the name and history of our benefactor. It would have been gratifying for me to have done something for him when afterward means were in my power."

## **Eventful life of Hortense**

### **Marriage of Hortense**

### **Queen of Holland**

### **Death of Hortense**

Poor Hortense! most wonderful were the vicissitudes of her checkered and joyless life. We here meet her, almost an infant, in poverty and obscurity. The mother and child arrive in Paris on the morning of that Reign of Terror, the story of which has made the ear of humanity to tingle. Hortense is deprived of both her parents, and is left in friendlessness and beggary in the streets of Paris. A charitable neighbor cherished and fed her. Her mother is liberated, and married to Napoleon; and Hortense, as daughter of the emperor, is surrounded with dazzling splendor, such as earth has seldom witnessed. We now meet Hortense, radiant in youthful beauty, one of the most admired and courted in the midst of the glittering throng, which, like a fairy vision, dazzles all eyes in the gorgeous apartments of Versailles and St. Cloud. Her person is adorned with the most costly fabrics and the most brilliant gems which Europe can afford. The nobles and princes of the proudest courts vie with each other for the honor of her hand. She is led to her sumptuous bridals by Louis Bonaparte, brother of the emperor; becomes the spouse of a king, and takes her seat upon the throne of Holland. But in the midst of all this external splendor she is wretched at heart. Not one congenial feeling unites her with the companion to whom she is bound. Louis, weary of regal pomp and constraint, abdicates the throne, and Hortense becomes unendurably weary of her pensive and unambitious spouse. They agree to separate; each to journey along, unattended by the other, the remainder of life's pilgrimage. Hortense seeks a joyless refuge in a secluded castle, in one of the most retired valleys of Switzerland. The tornado of counter-revolution sweeps over Europe, and all her exalted friends and towering hopes are prostrated in the dust. Lingering years of disappointment and sadness pass over her, and old age, with its infirmities, places her upon a dying bed. One only child, Louis Napoleon, since President of the French Republic, the victim of corroding ambition and ceaselessly-gnawing discontent, stands at her bed-side to close her eyes, and to follow her, a solitary and lonely mourner, to the grave. The dream of life has passed. The shadow has vanished away. Who can fathom the mystery of the creation of such a drama?

### **Meeting of Josephine and Beauharnais**

### **Influential character of Beauharnais**

Josephine arrived in France. She was received most cordially by her husband. Sorrowful experience had taught him the value of a home, and the worth of a pure and a sanctified love. Josephine again folded her idolized Eugene in her arms, and the anguish of past years was forgotten in the blissful enjoyments of a reunited family. These bright and happy days were, however, soon again clouded. The French Revolution was now in full career. The king and queen were in prison.

All law was prostrate. M. Beauharnais, at the commencement of the Revolution, had most cordially espoused the cause of popular liberty. He stood by the side of La Fayette a companion and a supporter. His commanding character gave him great influence. He was elected a deputy to the Constituent Assembly, and took an active part in its proceedings. Upon the dissolution of this Assembly, or States-General, as it was also called, as by vote none of its members were immediately re-eligible, he retired again to the army; but when the second or Legislative Assembly was dissolved and the National Convention was formed, he was returned as a member, and at two successive sessions was elected its president.

### **Jacobins and Girondists**

The people, having obtained an entire victory over monarchy and aristocracy, beheaded the king and queen, and drove the nobles from the realm. France was now divided into two great parties. The Jacobins were so called from an old cloister in which they at first held their meetings. All of the lowest, most vicious, and the reckless of the nation belonged to this party. They seemed disposed to overthrow all law, human and divine. Marat, Danton, and Robespierre were the blood-stained leaders of this wild and furious faction. The Girondists, their opponents, were so called from the department of the Gironde, from which most of the leaders of this party came. They wished for a republic like that of the United States, where there should be the protection of life, and property, and liberty, with healthy laws sacredly enforced.

### **The Jacobins triumphant**

The conflict between the two parties was long and terrible. The Jacobins gained the victory, and the Girondists were led to the guillotine. M. Beauharnais was an active member of the Girondist party, of which Madame Roland was the soul, and he perished with them. Many of the Girondists sought safety in concealment and retreat. M. Beauharnais, conscious of his political integrity, proudly refused to save his life by turning his back upon his foes.

### **Fearful commotions**

One morning Josephine was sitting in her parlor, in a state of great anxiety in reference to the fearful commotion of the times, when a servant announced that some one wished to speak to her. A young man of very gentle and prepossessing appearance was introduced, with a bag in his hand, in which were several pairs of shoes.

"Citizen," said the man to Josephine, "I understand that you want socks of plum gray."

Josephine looked up in surprise, hardly comprehending his meaning, when he approached nearer to her, and, in an under tone, whispered, "I have something to impart to you, madame."

"Explain yourself," she eagerly replied, much alarmed; "my servant is faithful."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "my life is at stake in this matter."

"Go, Victorine," said Josephine to her servant, "and call my husband."

### **The warning**

As soon as they were alone, the young man said, "There is not a moment to lose if you would save M. Beauharnais. The Revolutionary Committee last night passed a resolution to have him arrested, and at this very moment the warrant is making out."



### **Alarm of Josephine**

"How know you this?" she demanded, trembling violently.

"I am one of the committee," was the reply, "and, being a shoemaker, I thought these shoes would afford me a reasonable pretext for advertising you, madame."

At this moment M. Beauharnais entered the room, and Josephine, weeping, threw herself into his arms. "You see my husband," she said to the shoemaker.

"I have the honor of knowing him," was the reply.

### **Beauharnais proudly refuses to attempt an escape**

M. Beauharnais wished to reward the young man on the spot for his magnanimous and perilous deed of kindness. The offer was respectfully but decisively declined. To the earnest entreaties of Josephine and the young man that he should immediately secure his safety by his flight or concealment, he replied,

"I will never flee; with what can they charge me? I love liberty. I have borne arms for the Revolution."

"But you are a noble," the young man rejoined, "and that, in the eye of the Revolutionists, is a crime – an unpardonable crime. And, moreover, they accuse you of having been a member of the Constitutional Assembly."

"That," said M. Beauharnais, "is my most honorable title to glory. Who would not be proud of having proclaimed the rights of the nation, the fall of despotism, and the reign of laws?"

"What laws!" exclaimed Josephine. "It is in blood they are written."

"Madame," exclaimed the philanthropic young Jacobin, with a tone of severity, "when the tree of liberty is planted in an unfriendly soil, it must be watered with the blood of its enemies." Then, turning to M. Beauharnais, he said, "Within an hour it will no longer be possible to escape. I wished to save you, because I believe you innocent. Such was my duty to humanity. But if I am commanded to arrest you – pardon me – I shall do my duty; and you will acknowledge the patriot."

### **Entreaties of Josephine**

The young shoemaker withdrew, and Josephine in vain entreated her husband to attempt his escape. "Whither shall I flee?" he answered. "Is there a vault, a garret, a hiding-place into which the eye of the tyrant Robespierre does not penetrate? We must yield. If I am condemned, how can I escape? If I am not condemned, I have nothing to fear."

### **Arrest of Beauharnais**

About two hours elapsed when three members of the Revolutionary Committee, accompanied by a band of armed men, broke into the house. The young shoemaker was one of this committee, and with firmness, but with much urbanity, he arrested M. Beauharnais. Josephine, as her husband was led to prison, was left in her desolated home. And she found herself indeed deserted and alone. No one could then manifest any sympathy with the proscribed without periling life. Josephine's friends, one by one, all abandoned her. The young shoemaker alone, who had arrested her husband, continued secretly to call with words of sympathy.

## **Beneficence of Josephine**

### **The children deceived**

Josephine made great exertions to obtain the release of her husband, and was also unwearied in her benefactions to multitudes around her who, in those days of lawlessness and of anguish, were deprived of property, of friends, and of home. The only solace she found in her own grief was in ministering to the consolation of others. Josephine, from the kindest of motives, but very injudiciously, deceived her children in reference to their father's arrest, and led them to suppose that he was absent from home in consequence of ill health. When at last she obtained permission to visit, with her children, her husband in prison, they detected the deceit. After returning from the prison after their first interview, Hortense remarked to her mother that she thought her father's apartment very small, and the patients very numerous. She appeared for a time very thoughtful, and then inquired of Eugene, with an anxious expression of countenance,

"Do *you* believe that papa is ill? If he is, it certainly is not the sickness which the doctors cure."

"What do you mean, my dear child?" asked Josephine. "Can you suppose that papa and I would contrive between us to deceive you?"

"Pardon me, mamma, but I do think so."

"Why, sister," exclaimed Eugene, "how can you say so?"

"Good parents," she replied, "are unquestionably permitted to deceive their children when they wish to spare them uneasiness. Is it not so, mamma?"

Josephine was not a little embarrassed by this detection, and was compelled to acknowledge that which it was no longer possible to conceal.

## **Indiscretions**

### **Arrest of Josephine**

In the interview which M. Beuharnais held with his wife and his children, he spoke with some freedom to his children of the injustice of his imprisonment. This sealed his doom. Listeners, who were placed in an adjoining room to note down his words, reported the conversation, and magnified it into a conspiracy for the overthrow of the republic. M. Beuharnais was immediately placed in close confinement. Josephine herself was arrested and plunged into prison, and even the terrified children were rigidly examined by a brutal committee, who, by promises and by threats, did what they could to extort from them some confession which would lead to the conviction of their parents.

### **Josephine takes leave of her sleeping children**

### **A mother's tears**

Josephine, the morning of her arrest, received an anonymous letter, warning her of her danger. It was at an early hour, and her children were asleep in their beds. But how could she escape? Where could she go? Should she leave her children behind her – a mother abandon her children! Should

she take them with her, and thus prevent the possibility of eluding arrest? Would not her attempt at flight be construed into a confession of guilt, and thus compromise the safety of her husband? While distracted with these thoughts, she heard a loud knocking and clamor at the outer door of the house. She understood too well the significance of those sounds. With a great effort to retain a tranquil spirit, she passed into the room where her children were sleeping. As she fixed her eyes upon them, so sweetly lost in slumber, and thought of the utter abandonment to which they were doomed, her heart throbbed with anguish, and tears, of such bitterness as are seldom shed upon earth, filled her eyes. She bent over her daughter, and imprinted a mother's farewell kiss upon her forehead. The affectionate child, though asleep, clasped her arms around her mother's neck, and, speaking the thoughts of the dream passing through her mind, said "Come to bed. Fear nothing. They shall not take you away this night. I have prayed to God for you."

### **Brutality of the soldiers**

### **Josephine dragged to the Carmelites**

The tumult in the outer hall continually increasing, Josephine, fearful of awaking Hortense and Eugene, cast a last lingering look of love upon them, and, withdrawing from the chamber, closed the door and entered her parlor. There she found a band of armed men, headed by the brutal wretch who had so unfeelingly examined her children. The soldiers were hardened against every appeal of humanity, and performed their unfeeling office without any emotion, save that of hatred for one whom they deemed to be an aristocrat. They seized Josephine rudely, and took possession of all the property in the house in the name of the Republic. They dragged their victim to the convent of the Carmelites, and she was immured in that prison, where, but a few months before, more than eight thousand had been massacred by the mob of Paris. Even the blackest annals of religious fanaticism can record no outrages more horrible than those which rampant infidelity perpetrated in these days of its temporary triumphs.

### **Forlorn condition of the children**

### **They find a protector**

When Eugene and Hortense awoke, they found themselves indeed alone in the wide world. They were informed by a servant of the arrest and the imprisonment of their mother. The times had long been so troubled, and the children were so familiar with the recital of such scenes of violence, that they were prepared to meet these fearful perplexities with no little degree of discretion. After a few tears, they tried to summon resolution to act worthily of their father and mother. Hortense, with that energy of character which she manifested through her whole life, advised that they should go to the Luxembourg, where their father was confined, and demand admission to share his imprisonment. Eugene, with that caution which characterized him when one of the leaders in the army of Napoleon, and when viceroy of Italy, apprehensive lest thus they might in some way compromise the safety of their father, recalled to mind an aged great-aunt, who was residing in much retirement in the vicinity of Versailles, and suggested the propriety of seeking a refuge with her. An humble female friend conducted the children to Versailles, where they were most kindly received.

### **Gloomy forebodings of Beauharnais and Josephine**

When the gloom of the ensuing night darkened the city, M. Beauharnais in his cheerless cell, and Josephine in her prison still stained with the blood of massacre, wept over the desolation of their home and their hopes. They knew not the fate of their children, and their minds were oppressed with the most gloomy forebodings. On the ensuing day, Josephine's heart was cheered with the tidings of their safety. Such was the second terrific storm which Josephine encountered on life's dark waters.

## **Chapter IV. Scenes in Prison**

**A.D. 1794**

### **Convent of the Carmelites**

#### **Quality of the prisoners**

The Convent of the Carmelites, in which Josephine was imprisoned, had acquired a fearful celebrity during the Reign of Terror. It was a vast and gloomy pile, so capacious in its halls, its chapel, its cells, and its subterranean dungeons, that at one time nearly ten thousand prisoners were immured within its frowning walls. In every part of the building the floors were still deeply stained with the blood of the recent massacres. The infuriated men and women, intoxicated with rum and rage, who had broken into the prison, dragged multitudes of their victims, many of whom were priests, into the chapel, that they might, in derision of religion, poniard them before the altar. About three hundred thousand innocent victims of the Revolution now crowded the prisons of France. These unhappy captives, awaiting the hour of their execution, were not the ignorant, the debased, the degraded, but the noblest, the purest, the most refined of the citizens of the republic. Josephine was placed in the chapel of the convent, where she found one hundred and sixty men and women as the sharers of her captivity.

#### **Cheerfulness of Josephine**

#### **Reading the daily journal**

#### **Scenes from the prison windows**

The natural buoyancy of her disposition led her to take as cheerful a view as possible of the calamity in which the family was involved. Being confident that no serious charge could be brought against her husband, she clung to the hope that they both would soon be liberated, and that happy days were again to dawn upon her reunited household. She wrote cheering letters to her husband and to her children. Her smiling countenance and words of kindness animated with new courage the grief-stricken and the despairing who surrounded her. She immediately became a universal favorite with the inmates of the prison. Her instinctive tact enabled her to approach all acceptably, whatever their rank or character. She soon became prominent in influence among the prisoners, and reigned there, as every where else, over the hearts of willing subjects. Her composure, her cheerfulness, her clear and melodious voice, caused her to be selected to read, each day, to the ladies, the journal of the preceding day. From their windows they could see, each morning, the carts bearing through the streets their burden of unhappy victims who were to perish on the scaffold. Not unfrequently a wife

would catch a glimpse of her husband, or a mother of her son, borne past the grated windows in the cart of the condemned. Who can tell the fear and anguish with which the catalogue of the guillotined was read, when each trembling heart apprehended that the next word might announce that some loved one had perished? Not unfrequently a piercing shriek, and a fainting form falling lifeless upon the floor, revealed upon whose heart the blow had fallen.

### **Anecdote of Hortense**

Hortense, impetuous and unreflecting, was so impatient to see her mother, that one morning she secretly left her aunt's house, and, in a market cart, traveled thirty miles to Paris. She found her mother's maid, Victorine, at the family mansion, where all the property was sealed up by the revolutionary functionaries. After making unavailing efforts to obtain an interview with her parents, she returned the next day to Fontainebleau. Josephine was informed of this imprudent act of ardent affection, and wrote to her child the following admirable letter:

### **Letter from Josephine to Hortense**

"I should be entirely satisfied with the good heart of my Hortense were I not displeased with her bad head. How is it, my daughter, that, without permission from your aunt, you have come to Paris? This was very wrong! But it was to see me, you will say. You ought to be aware that no one can see me without an order, to obtain which requires both means and precautions. And, besides, you got upon M. Dorcet's cart, at the risk of incommoding him and retarding the conveyance of his merchandise. In all this you have been very inconsiderate. My child! observe, it is not sufficient to do good; you must also do good properly. At your age, the first of all virtues is confidence and docility toward your relations. I am therefore obliged to tell you that I prefer your tranquil attachment to your misplaced warmth. This, however, does not prevent me from embracing you, but less tenderly than I shall do when I learn that you have returned to your aunt."

### **Mitigation of severity**

### **Josephine appeals to the Committee**

There was at this time, for some unknown reason, a little mitigation in the severity with which the prisoners were treated, and Josephine was very sanguine in the belief that the hour of their release was at hand. Emboldened by this hope, she wrote a very earnest appeal to the Committee of Public Safety, before whom the accusations against M. Beauharnais would be brought. The sincerity and frankness of the eloquent address so touched the feelings of the president of the committee, that he resolved to secure for Josephine and her husband the indulgence of an interview. The greatest caution was necessary in doing this, for he periled his own life by the manifestation of any sympathy for the accused.

## **She is summoned to trial**

## **The unexpected interview**

## **Feeling manifested by Beauharnais**

The only way in which he could accomplish his benevolent project was to have them both brought together for trial. Neither of them knew of this design. One morning Josephine, while dreaming of liberty and of her children, was startled by the unexpected summons to appear before the Revolutionary tribunal. She knew that justice had no voice which could be heard before that merciless and sanguinary court. She knew that the mockery of a trial was but the precursor of the sentence, which was immediately followed by the execution. From her high hopes this summons caused a fearful fall. Thoughts of her husband and her children rushed in upon her overflowing heart, and the tenderness of the woman for a few moments triumphed over the heroine. Soon, however, regaining in some degree her composure, she prepared herself, with as much calmness as possible, to meet her doom. She was led from her prison to the hall where the blood-stained tribunal held its session, and, with many others, was placed in an ante-room, to await her turn for an examination of a few minutes, upon the issues of which life or death was suspended. While Josephine was sitting here, in the anguish of suspense, an opposite door was opened, and some armed soldiers led in a group of victims from another prison. As Josephine's eye vacantly wandered over their features, she was startled by the entrance of one whose wan and haggard features strikingly reminded her of her husband. She looked again, their eyes met, and husband and wife were instantly locked in each other's embrace. At this interview, the stoicism of M. Beauharnais was entirely subdued – the thoughts of the past, of his unworthiness, of the faithful and generous love of Josephine, rushed in a resistless flood upon his soul. He leaned his aching head upon the forgiving bosom of Josephine, and surrendered himself to love, and penitence, and tears.

## **Trial of M. Beauharnais and Josephine**

## **Hopes cherished**

This brief and painful interview was their last. They never met again. They were allowed but a few moments together ere the officers came and dragged M. Beauharnais before the judges. His examination lasted but a few minutes, when he was remanded back to prison. Nothing was proved against him. No serious accusation even was laid to his charge. But he was a noble. He had descended from illustrious ancestors, and therefore, as an aristocrat, he was doomed to die. Josephine was also conducted into the presence of this sanguinary tribunal. She was the wife of a nobleman. She was the friend of Marie Antoinette. She had even received distinguished attentions at court. These crimes consigned her also to the guillotine. Josephine was conducted back to her prison, unconscious of the sentence which had been pronounced against her husband and herself. She even cherished the sanguine hope that they would soon be liberated, for she could not think it possible that they could be doomed to death without even the accusation of crime.

Each evening there was brought into the prison a list of the names of those who were to be led to the guillotine on the ensuing morning. A few days after the trial, on the evening of the 24th of

July, 1794, M. Beauharnais found his name with the proscribed who were to be led to the scaffold with the light of the next day. Love for his wife and his children rendered life too precious to him to be surrendered without anguish. But sorrow had subdued his heart, and led him with prayerfulness to look to God for strength to meet the trial. The native dignity of his character also nerved him to meet his fate with fortitude.

### **Beauharnais's last letter to Josephine**

#### **Brutality of the executioners**

He sat down calmly in his cell, and wrote a long, affectionate, and touching letter to his wife. He assured her of his most heartfelt appreciation of the purity and nobleness of her character, and of her priceless worth as a wife and a mother. He thanked her again and again for the generous spirit with which she forgave his offenses, when, weary and contrite, he returned from his guilty wanderings, and anew sought her love. He implored her to cherish in the hearts of his children the memory of their father, that, though dead, he might still live in their affections. While he was writing, the executioners came in to cut off his long hair, that the ax might do its work unimpeded. Picking up a small lock from the floor, he wished to transmit it to his wife as his last legacy. The brutal executioners forbade him the privilege. He, however, succeeded in purchasing from them a few hairs, which he inclosed in his letter, and which she subsequently received.

#### **Removal of the guillotine**

#### **Execution of M. Beauharnais**

In the early dawn of the morning, the cart of the condemned was at the prison door. The Parisians were beginning to be weary of the abundant flow of blood, and Robespierre had therefore caused the guillotine to be removed from the Place de la Revolution to an obscure spot in the Faubourg St. Antoine. A large number of victims were doomed to die that morning. The carts, as they rolled along the pavements, groaned with their burdens, and the persons in the streets looked on in sullen silence. M. Beauharnais, with firmness, ascended the scaffold. The slide of the guillotine fell, and the brief drama of his stormy life was ended.

#### **Josephine becomes informed thereof**

#### **Her grief**

While the mutilated form of M. Beauharnais was borne to an ignoble burial, Josephine, entirely unconscious of the calamity which had befallen her, was cheering her heart with the hope of a speedy union with her husband and her children in their own loved home. The morning after the execution, the daily journal, containing the names of those who had perished on the preceding day, was brought, as usual, to the prison. Some of the ladies in the prison had received the intimation that M. Beauharnais had fallen. They watched, therefore, the arrival of the journal, and, finding their fears established, they tried, for a time, to conceal the dreadful intelligence from the unconscious widow. But Josephine



was eagerly inquiring for the paper, and at last obtaining it, she ran her eye hastily over the record of executions, and found the name of her husband in the fatal list. She fell senseless upon the floor. For a long time she remained in a swoon. When consciousness returned, and with it a sense of the misery into which she was plunged, in the delirium of her anguish she exclaimed, "Oh God! let me die! let me die! There is no peace for me but in the grave."

### **Her despair**

Her friends gathered around her. They implored her to think of her children, and for their sake to prize a life she could no longer prize for her own. The poignancy of her grief gradually subsided into the calm of despair. A sleepless night lingered slowly away. The darkness and the gloom of a prison settled down upon her soul. The morning dawned drearily. A band of rough and merciless agents from the Revolutionary Assembly came to her with the almost welcome intelligence that in two days she was to be led to the Conciergerie, and from thence to her execution. These tidings would have been joyful to Josephine were it not for her children. A mother's love clung to the orphans, and it was with pain inexpressible that she thought of leaving them alone in this tempestuous world – a world made so stormy, so woeful, by man's inhumanity to his fellow-man.

### **Preparations for the execution of Josephine**

#### **She becomes cheerful**

#### **Credulity of Josephine**

The day preceding the one assigned for her execution arrived. The numerous friends of Josephine in the prison hung around her with tears. The heartless jailer came and took away her mattress, saying, with a sneer, that she would need it no longer, as her head was soon to repose upon the soft pillow of the guillotine. It is reported that, as the hour of execution drew nearer, Josephine became not only perfectly calm, but even cheerful in spirit. She looked affectionately upon the weeping group gathered around her, and, recalling at the moment the prediction of the aged negress, gently smiling, said, "We have no cause for alarm my friends; I am not to be executed. It is written in the decrees of Fate that I am yet to be Queen of France." Some of her friends thought that the suppressed anguish of her heart had driven her to delirium, and they wept more bitterly. But one of the ladies, Madame d'Aiguillon, was a little irritated at pleasantry which she deemed so ill timed. With something like resentment, she asked, "Why, then, madame, do you not appoint your household?" "Ah! that is true," Josephine replied. "I had forgotten. Well, you, my dear, shall be my maid of honor. I promise you the situation." They both lived to witness the strange fulfillment of this promise. Josephine, however, who, from the circumstances of her early life, was inclined to credulity, afterward declared that at the time her mind reposed in the full confidence that in some way her life would be saved, and that the prediction of the negress would be virtually realized.

## **The unexpected deliverance**

### **A miraculous change**

#### **Deliverance to the captives**

The shades of night settled down around the gloomy convent, enveloping in their folds the despairing hearts which thronged this abode of woe. Suddenly the most exultant shout of joy burst from every lip, and echoed along through corridors, and dungeons, and grated cells. There was weeping and fainting for rapture inexpressible. The prisoners leaped into each other's arms, and, frantic with happiness, clung together in that long and heartfelt embrace which none can appreciate but those who have been companions in woe. Into the blackness of their midnight there had suddenly burst the blaze of noonday. What caused this apparently miraculous change? The iron-hearted jailer had passed along, announcing, in coarsest phrase, that Robespierre was guillotined. There had been a new revolution. The tyrant had fallen. The prisons which he had filled with victims were to be emptied of their captives.

## **Chapter V. The Release from Prison**

**A.D. 1794-A.D. 1795**

**Robespierre**

**M. Tallien**

The overthrow of Robespierre, and the consequent escape of Josephine from the doom impending over her, was in the following manner most strangely accomplished. The tyranny of Robespierre had become nearly insupportable. Conspiracies were beginning to be formed to attempt his overthrow. A lady of great beauty and celebrity, Madame de Fontenay, was imprisoned with Josephine. M. Tallien, a man of much influence with a new party then rising into power, had conceived a strong attachment for this lady, and, though he could not safely indulge himself in interviews with her in prison, he was in the habit of coming daily to the Convent of the Carmelites that he might have the satisfaction of catching a glimpse of the one he loved through her grated window.

**Madame de Fontenay**

**A lover's device**

Madame de Fontenay had received secret intelligence that she was soon to be led before the Convention for trial. This she knew to be but the prelude of her execution. That evening M. Tallien appeared as usual before the guarded casement of the Carmelites. Madame de Fontenay and Josephine, arm in arm, leaned against the bars of the window, as if to breathe the fresh evening air, and made a sign to arrest M. Tallien's particular attention. They then dropped from the window a piece of cabbage-leaf, in which Madame de Fontenay had inclosed the following note:

"My trial is decreed – the result is certain. If you love me as you say, urge every means to save France and me."

**Execution of Robespierre decreed**

**He is guillotined**

With intense interest, they watched the motions of M. Tallien until they saw him take the cabbage-leaf from the ground. Roused by the billet to the consciousness of the necessity of immediate action, he proceeded to the Convention, and, with the impassioned energy which love for Madame de Fontenay and hatred of Robespierre inspired, made an energetic and fearless assault upon the

tyrant. Robespierre, pale and trembling, saw that his hour had come. A decree of accusation was preferred against him, and the head of the merciless despot fell upon that guillotine where he had already caused so many thousands to perish. The day before Josephine was to have been executed, he was led, mangled and bleeding, to the scaffold. He had attempted to commit suicide. The ball missed its aim, but shattered his jaw. The wretched man ascended the ladder, and stood upon the platform of the guillotine. The executioners tore the bandage from his mangled face, that the linen might not impede the blow of the ax. Their rude treatment of the inflamed wound extorted a cry of agony, which thrilled upon the ear of the assembled crowd, and produced a silence as of the grave. The next moment the slide fell, and the mutilated head was severed from the body. Then the very heavens seemed rent by one long, loud, exulting shout, which proclaimed that Robespierre was no more!

### **Singular mode of conveying information**

#### **Pantomimic representation of Robespierre's fall**

The death of Robespierre arrested the ax which was just about to fall upon the head of Josephine. The first intimation of his overthrow was communicated to her in the following singular manner. Madame d'Aiguillon was weeping bitterly, and sinking down with faintness in view of the bloody death to which her friend was to be led on the morrow. Josephine, whose fortitude had not forsaken her, drew her almost senseless companion to the window, that she might be revived by the fresh air. Her attention was arrested by a woman of the lower orders in the street, who was continually looking up to the window, beckoning to Josephine, and making many very singular gestures. She seemed to desire to call her attention particularly to the *robe* which she wore, holding it up, and pointing to it again and again. Josephine, through the iron grating, cried out *Robe*. The woman eagerly gave signs of assent, and immediately took up a stone, which in French is *Pierre*. Josephine again cried out *pierre*. The woman appeared overjoyed on perceiving that her pantomime began to be understood. She then put the two together, pointing alternately to the one and to the other. Josephine cried out *Robespierre*. The woman then began to dance and shout with delight, and made signs of cutting off a head.

This pantomime excited emotions in the bosom of Josephine which cannot be described. She hardly dared to believe that the tyrant had actually fallen, and yet she knew not how else to account for the singular conduct of the woman. But a few moments elapsed before a great noise was heard in the corridor of the prison. The turnkey, in loud and fearless tones, cried out to his dog, "Get out, you cursed brute of a Robespierre!" This emphatic phraseology convinced them that the sanguinary monster before whom all France had trembled was no longer to be feared. In a few moments the glad tidings were resounding through the prison, and many were in an instant raised from the abyss of despair to almost a delirium of bliss. Josephine's bed was restored to her, and she placed her head upon her pillow that night, and sank down to the most calm and delightful repose.

#### **Universal joy caused by the death of the tyrant**

No language can describe the transports excited throughout all France by the tidings of the fall of Robespierre. Three hundred thousand captives were then lingering in the prisons of Paris awaiting death. As the glittering steel severed the head of the tyrant from his body, their prison doors burst open, and France was filled with hearts throbbing with ecstasy, and with eyes overflowing with tears of rapture. Five hundred thousand fugitives were trembling in their retreats, apprehensive of arrest.

They issued from their hiding-places frantic with joy, and every village witnessed their tears and embraces.

### **Josephine released from captivity**

#### **Gloomy prospect**

The new party which now came into power with Tallien at its head, immediately liberated those who had been condemned by their opponents, and the prison doors of Josephine were thrown open to her. But from the gloom of her cell she returned to a world still dark and clouded. Her husband had been beheaded, and all his property confiscated. She found herself a widow and penniless. Nearly all of her friends had perished in the storms which had swept over France. The Reign of Terror had passed away, but gaunt famine was staring the nation in the face. They were moments of ecstasy when Josephine, again free, pressed Eugene and Hortense to her heart. But the most serious embarrassments immediately crowded upon her. Poverty, stern and apparently remediless, was her lot. She had no friends upon whom she had any right to call for aid. There was no employment open before her by which she could obtain her subsistence; and it appeared that she and her children were to be reduced to absolute beggary. These were among the darkest hours of her earthly career. It was from this abyss of obscurity and want that she was to be raised to a position of splendor and of power such as the wildest dreams of earthly ambition could hardly have conceived.

#### **Heartlessness of Marat**

#### **Eugene apprenticed to an artisan**

Though Robespierre was dead, the strife of rancorous parties raged with unabated violence, and blood flowed freely. The reign of the mob still continued, and it was a mark of patriotism demanded by the clamors of haggard want and degradation to persecute all of noble blood. Young girls from the boarding-schools, and boys just emerging from the period of childhood, were beheaded by the guillotine. "We must exterminate," said Marat, "all the *whelps* of aristocracy." Josephine trembled for her children. Poverty, and the desire of concealing Eugene among the mass of the people, induced her to apprentice her son to a house-carpenter. For several months Eugene cheerfully and laboriously toiled in this humble occupation. But the sentiments he had imbibed from both father and mother ennobled him, and every day produced new developments of a lofty character, which no circumstances could long depress.

#### **Kindness of Josephine's friends**

Let such a woman as Josephine, with her cheerful, magnanimous, self-sacrificing, and generous spirit, be left destitute in any place where human beings are congregated, and she will soon inevitably meet with those who will feel honored in securing her friendship and in offering her a home. Every fireside has a welcome for a noble heart. Madame Dumoulin, a lady of great elevation of character, whose large fortune had by some chance escaped the general wreck, invited Josephine to her house, and freely supplied her wants. Madame Fontenay, also, who was a woman of great beauty and accomplishments, soon after her liberation was married to M. Tallien, to whom she had tossed the note, inclosed in a cabbage-leaf, from her prison window. It was this note which had so suddenly

secured the overthrow of the tyrant, and had rescued so many from the guillotine. They both became the firm friends of Josephine. Others, also, soon became strongly attracted to her by the loveliness of her character, and were ambitious to supply all her wants.

### **She recovers her property**

Through M. Tallien, she urged her claim upon the National Convention for the restoration of her confiscated property. After a long and tedious process, she succeeded in regaining such a portion of her estate as to provide her amply with all the comforts of life. Again she had her own peaceful home, with Eugene and Hortense by her side. Her natural buoyancy of spirits rose superior to the storms which had swept so mercilessly over her, and in the love of her idolized children, and surrounded by the sympathies of appreciative friends, days of serenity, and even of joy, began to shine upon her.

### **A domestic scene**

A domestic scene occurred in the dwelling of Josephine on the anniversary of the death of M. Beauharnais peculiarly characteristic of the times and of the French people. Josephine called Eugene to her room, and presented to him a portrait of his father. "Carry it to your chamber, my son," she said, "and often let it be the object of your contemplations. Above all, let him whose image it presents be your constant model. He was the most amiable of men; he would have been the best of fathers."

Eugene was a young man of that enthusiastic genius which is the almost invariable accompaniment of a noble character. His emotions were deeply excited. With the characteristic ardor of his countrymen, he covered the portrait with kisses, and wept freely. Josephine folded her noble boy in her embrace, and they mingled their tears together.

### **A new order of knighthood**

In the evening, as Josephine was sitting alone in her parlor, her son entered, accompanied by six young men, his companions, each decorated with a copy of the portrait of M. Beauharnais suspended from the neck by a black and white ribbon. "You see," said Eugene to his mother, "the founders of a new order of knighthood. Behold our tutelary saint," pointing to the portrait of his father. "And these are the first members." He then introduced his youthful companions to his mother.

### **The Order of *Filial Love***

"Ours," he continued, "is named the Order of *Filial Love*; and, if you would witness the first inauguration, pass with these gentlemen into the small drawing-room."

### **Inauguration**

### **Decorations of the room**

Josephine entered the drawing-room with the youthful group, and found it very tastefully ornamented with garlands of ivy, roses, and laurels. Inscriptions, taken from the printed discourses or remarkable sayings of M. Beauharnais, were suspended upon the walls. Girandoles, with lighted tapers, brilliantly illuminated the room. An altar was erected, hung with festoons of flowers, and upon

this altar was placed the full-length portrait of M. Beauharnais. Three crowns of white and red roses were suspended from the picture-frame, and in front were placed two vases with perfumes.

### **The oath**

The young gentlemen ranged themselves about the altar in perfect silence, and, at a concerted signal, eagerly unsheathed the swords which they wore at their sides, and, clasping hands, solemnly took the oath, "*To love their parents, succor each other, and to defend their country.*" At this moment, Eugene, unfurling and waving a small banner, with its folds shaded the head of his father. "We then embraced each other," says Josephine, "mingling tears with smiles, and the most amiable disorder succeeded to the ceremonial of inauguration."

### **New organisation of social society**

The fascination of Josephine's person and address drew multitudes of friends around her, and her society was ever coveted. As time softened the poignancy of her past sorrows, she mingled more and more in the social circles of that metropolis where pleasure and gayety ever reign. The terrible convulsions of the times had thrown the whole fabric of society into confusion. Great efforts were now made to revive the festivities of former days. Two centers of society were naturally established. The first included that in which Josephine moved. It was composed of the remains of the ancient nobility, who had returned to Paris with the fragments of their families and their shattered fortunes. Rigid economy was necessary to keep up any appearance of elegance. But that polish of manners which almost invariably descends from an illustrious ancestry marked all their intercourse. The humiliations through which the nobles had passed had not diminished the exclusiveness of their tastes. The other circle was composed of merchants and bankers who had acquired opulence in the midst of the confiscations and storms of revolution. The passion for display was prominent in all their assemblies, as is necessarily the case with those whose passport to distinction is wealth.

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