

# THOSE QUARRELSOME BONAPARTES

*X—The Sun Rides High—the Shadows Lengthen*

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MORE than ever did Letizia rue the day when the *sous-lieutenant* threw in his fortunes with France. The Revolution might have been settled, but there were endless revolutions in her family. Good fortune had been their ill fortune, for success had spoiled them, plunging the daughters at an impressionable age, into the corrupt society of Marseilles when they should have been at home in the more wholesome, if somewhat provincial, life of Corsica. And it had changed her sons. They might have been useful contented citizens, had not their brother's dizzy climb turned their heads. They seemed even now to be pulling at their brother's coat-tails, as if it were their own merit and not his genius that had brought them where they were.

Letizia did not stay with Joseph in the Rue Rocher much longer, for Joseph, on the rising tide, took over the old Marboeuf palace; and the weary woman, who had no mind for palaces, went with her brother into more modest quarters on the Rue du Mont Blanc, furnishing some of the rooms out of her own purse.

The news that reached her in this sequestered retreat was most disquieting. Joseph and Lucien, backed by their coteries of syco-

phants, were quarreling over the succession to the consulship for life. And Lucien, as Minister of Interior, was paying no attention at all to business; letting his subordinates attach his rubber-stamp signature to important documents. No wonder Napoleon was furious.

Even their sisters were involved in disputes, jealously demanding titles and preferment for themselves and husbands, precedence over Josephine at dinners and banquets, also front places in that line forming about a hypothetical throne, whispers of which were now heard everywhere.

It all disgusted Letizia who asked so little for herself; yet she was constrained to take sides with her own flesh and blood when she saw Josephine intriguing for a match between Louis and Hortense. It may have been Napoleon's idea; but Letizia thought that the creole had maneuvered things so cleverly that Napoleon at last fancied it his own. For he had been vastly disappointed in this younger brother for whom he had sacrificed so much, and who had turned out such a poor excuse for an officer and was degenerating into a morbid neurasthenic, obsessed with the fear of death and even of marriage. Certainly he was not royal material; but Napoleon believed that

the issue of such a union, should there be any, would offset the constant threat of Josephine's barrenness; for a nephew would secure a dynasty.

Pauline, too, was a continuing source of worry. She cared for little besides pleasure; and her conduct, though perhaps not immoral, was light to the extent of holding very lively Bohemian parties and posing for favored artists in the altogether. For a cure, Napoleon sent her to the West Indies, dissolved, like Josephine, in tears; but there her husband died, and on her return she had immediately become enamoured of Prince Camillo Borghese, Roman of both nose and lineage, and considered quite a catch. And since the pretty Paulette, like a child demanding a toy, must have the man she had set her heart on, Letizia sanctioned very hasty nuptials in an obscure chapel. Possibly, as at Montebello, there was need for haste. But Napoleon had not been taken into consultation; and the rub was that only seven months had elapsed since her first husband's death, while Napoleon in his Code had decreed, with meticulous precision, fifty-eight weeks of mourning. Thus the laws he made so debonairly threatened to trip him. And when he made inquiries, because of the now open scandal of a *liaison* between his sister and Borghese, in fact honestly mated, he became quite properly enraged. The laws *in toto* might not be made for him—though, of course, he intended on the whole to obey them—but certainly they must not be violated by any member of his family. More than ever, therefore, did he look with favor on the alliance between Louis and

Hortense; more than ever did he take the part of Josephine and her children against his relatives, including his own mother.

Matters reached a climax when Duroc brought a freshly-printed circular to the First Consul. Duroc was the innocent messenger, for the ferret eye of Fouché had discovered this incriminating evidence and he had inveigled that honest officer into presenting it to Napoleon, then in his cabinet in the Pavillon de Flore. Rapidly his chief glanced over it, crumpled it in his hand, then carefully unrolled and uncreased it.

"Send for Fouché," he said; "also summon the Minister of Interior."

Then when the two appeared, eyeing each other, with ominous calm he asked,

"Where did you discover this, Fouché?"

"It is being circulated, *Monsieur le Premier Consul*, all over Paris."

Lucien advanced angrily; his brother waved him back.

"One moment. And why do you accuse the Citizen Minister of Interior of the authorship?"

"Because of these paragraphs here, advocating two brothers' claims to a *throne*!"

"You lie," said Lucien hotly.

"An easy defence," retorted the Minister of Police, "when you *caused* it to be written."

Then followed accusation and hot retort between the death's-head, with the simper that was so like a sneer on his bloodless lips, and the fiery young man. Through it all, the First Consul sat, saying not a word, letting them have it out. He wanted to see, now that Lucien was in a mess, how much of a man he

would show himself or how much more the fool.

Josephine, tripping up the stairs, heard the angry voices, and paused. The words, "king," "throne," "dynasty" caught her ear.

"Are they still fighting over that?" she sighed, then without ceremony broke in.

Angrily the First Consul rose. Never from any one would he brook interruption at Councils of State. But, fear in her heart, she flew to him, clung to his neck and begged, pleaded and sobbed out to him:

"Oh, give up this idea of royalty. I beg of you. It will mean our ruin!"

The convulsive working of his facial muscles that now betrayed his wrath came and vanished as rapidly as the little wrinkles that a passing zephyr sometimes breathes upon a pool.

"Cease!" he said. "You, too, are a fool. You do not know what you are saying; and in the presence of others!"

"Oh," she cried, "do not let them persuade you to this step."

And tears made ravages in the rouge; the sobs became sniffles. It was almost grotesque.

"There is no step," he retorted angrily. "We are discussing a foolish little pamphlet. There, there, dry them. *Que diable!* You still here, Fouché? Get out!"

Casting a glance at the tearful lady from under the lowered shutters of his eyes, the Minister of Police bowed himself out.

"Now. Lucien, do you see what a precious fool you have just made of yourself? Why, even to concoct a title like this, '*Parallèle entre César, Cromwell et Bonaparte,*' was a *bêtise*.

Who revealed to you that there would be a throne? I have not designed it. Your idiocy has just lost you your portfolio, Citizen Secretary."

Lucien achieved a magnificent bow, choking back his anger. He might have lost his position but he would save his face and his soul's superiority.

"You take it back," he managed, "with no more pleasure than I resign it."

Thrusting Josephine aside, Napoleon strode toward him. If looks could have killed, brother Lucien would have made no more fine speeches, published no more verses and pamphlets.

Ever swift in her intuitions, Josephine now saw a chance not only to stop these dynastic designs but to disarm an enemy by defending him. So she flew between the two men, once more clung to her husband's neck, running her fingers through his hair and calling him endearing names in broken accents. Nor was it all acting. She would have liked nothing better than to be at peace with this turbulent family.

But now there was another interruption. Possibly the palace was full of eavesdroppers, for word of the fray had gone—no one knew how—to the Rue du Mont Blanc and Letizia. She had heard of other quarrels and of one particularly, when Napoleon, who had received Joseph and Lucien in his bath, had suddenly risen in the tub, only to fall back and douse the two petitioners. He had much enjoyment out of that; but this, she knew, was no silly child's play. So immediately she had put on her bonnet and made for the palace; and

without knocking, entered the cabinet to face Josephine, no quarter now in her imperious eyes.

"It is you who have done it," Letizia cried to her. "You have intrigued against Lucien with your despicable friend, Fouché!" And there was an ominous accent on the "*friend*."

"That is unjust," whimpered Josephine softly, and Napoleon tried to interfere.

"Mother, Mother, have you too lost your senses?" he cried almost beside himself between the two.

"Nay, hear me out!" the old lady went on intrepidly. "I will have my say. Who was it took gambling concessions from Fouché? Your wife! Who took a thousand gold louis for giving information from the palace?"

Napoleon's hand shook.

"Is this true?" he asked Josephine, almost in a whisper.

For answer she only sobbed: "It is not as she makes it appear. It was only a loan." And he turned from her with a gesture of disgust.

"*Bah!* There is no use in cross-examining you. You would only lie about it. Mother, you do not lie; but you have let your rage get the better of you. You—"

"*Rage!*" I have cause for rage. It is she who plotted with Fouché these lies about my boy."

"Lucien, Lucien! Always Lucien!" he exclaimed both with exasperation and sadness. "Do you care only for him? Have you no thought for me?"

"I love best," she said, "the one who is unfortunate."

"Unfortunate!" He threw up his hands.

Nevertheless Napoleon weakened, as so often he did where his family was concerned, not so far as to jeopardize his policies seriously, but to give them honors and spending-money enough to live like princes. When his wrath had cooled he summoned Lucien.

"You must give up your portfolio," he said. "I cannot publicly sanction your pernicious pamphlets and your reference to me as Cæsar, by retaining you. But I cannot forget that you are my brother. You are no longer Minister of Interior; you are Ambassador to Spain."

So he whom Letizia had called "unfortunate" went to Madrid, to bungle treaties and receive many handsome presents from prime ministers and kings. Still, Napoleon, mindful perhaps of Brumaire, patched up his treaties, overlooked his blunders until they grew too serious, then called his brother home, giving him a handsome income and a palace in which he could write more romances and display the masterpieces given him, some said in lieu of bribes, by the King of Spain.

Joseph did a little better—for the time. Off too he went, to negotiate with England the treaty of Amiens; and, coached by his brother, came back with excellent results. And Napoleon acknowledged his services by thrusting him in front of the First Consul's own person to receive the plaudits of the crowd. It was not an unaffectionate gesture, though it may have served an ulterior purpose. Nor was it entirely undeserved by Joseph, whose chief fault lay in having such a superior younger brother. But Joseph found favor only for a little while, for Lucien

again got into hot water, and Joseph formed with him a new *entente*, thinking thus to strengthen their chances for succession.

Lucien's trouble this time was born of woman. Poor Christine, who had learned so quickly of life, had now learned something more from death. Lucien was inconsolable. He haunted her grave and buttonholed every one to recite her virtues. In fact his grief was so poignant that in six months he set up a grass-widow in a little hotel connected with his own by a tunnel, through which he paraded in his nightcap for surcease from his sorrow. A son was duly, or unduly, born; and in a rush of conscience, or because he thought this heir might do for a dynasty in place of a merely supposititious nephew, he gave the lady full benefit of clergy.

Again Napoleon was kept in the dark, until Joseph took it in his head to enlighten him, at the wrong time; for Napoleon, at dinner at Malmaison, had just been taking Josephine to task because of brother Jérôme. Brother Jérôme, too had gone and got himself married to a "nobody," a Mistress Betsy Patterson of Baltimore, in the new American republic.

"The young cockerel," the First Consul had just been saying to Josephine, "does nothing, knows nothing! You women spoiled him. While I was away he spent every hour of the twenty-four gaming, carrying on affairs, or going about Paris buying everything he saw and sending the bills to the Tuileries. Yet you did not correct his conduct, merely petted him and laughed at his follies. Why, when I came back and put him in the navy, this powder-

monkey who scarce can shave, reads me a lecture on my naval policy. And now he marries overnight, some foreigner no one ever heard of, when I had other designs for him."

Having thus delivered himself he retired to his apartment upstairs, where Joseph was ushered in to explode the new bombshell. The First Consul also exploded.

"What! acknowledge a bastard?" he cried. "I will see you all back in Ajaccio first—and to starve. You flout me—all of you. My sisters and brothers form cabals against me. No, no"—this to Joseph's attempted protests—"I am not such an idiot! Let him give up this woman with whom he has lived illegally."

With the utmost delicacy Joseph suggested that the First Consul too had had affairs.

"Precious few!" retorted Napoleon. "Not one tenth of those you and Paris have credited me with. Nor have they been conducted in public to affront opinion and hurt my wife."

"But Lucien," interposed Joseph, "has been discreet. He has married her."

"Discreet"! It has been an open scandal! And the woman is at any man's call. You are stupid to urge this. Do you not perceive such alliances weaken my position and that of my whole family, and that proper ones strengthen it? No, tell Lucien I do not care whom he lives with, provided it be decently. It is his business. But I will not acknowledge the woman or her offspring before the world."

There were more diplomatic interchanges between the second and



third brothers, the first acting as intermediary. So Joseph, on the next occasion, reported Lucien's fine sentiments: "My son, wife and I stand together. Nothing shall part us."

"*Quelle sottise!*" once more exploded Napoleon. "He would play the noble hero in righteous indignation? I might accept such excuses from St. Anthony or St. Francis, but not from Lucien or Jérôme!"

He made one characteristic turn of the apartment, then paused before Joseph.

"You are all against me. I have given you everything, yet you cry for more. Well, your eternal wrangling has done one good thing—it has crystallized my determination. Frenchmen want no republic. Like all my brawling relatives, they need a strong hand, an emperor and an established dynasty. So long as I am merely an elected ruler, all Europe will continue to shoot at me from ambush, try to stab me, blow me up, as they did on the Rue Sainte Nicaise. Each day a fresh proof of plots by their hired assassins is brought to me.

"And," he added with sarcasm, not unmixed with hurt, "my brothers want thrones, my sisters diadems, to play with. *Eh bien*, you shall have them!"

The last straw came when Joseph and Lucien undertook to upset Louis who was supposedly safe in the Beauharnais faction since his marriage with Hortense and the birth of his son. Louis from his study of mortality and the pharmacopœia seemed to have passed on some of the very diseases guarded against in that

horrendous tome, for the little Charles Napoleon, born in 1802 and now two years old, was a squawling and croupy infant. Nevertheless Napoleon had announced his intention of naming the child as his successor to the consulship, which in a month or so would mean the throne. The moping Louis had been indifferent to the honor; but when Joseph and Lucien placed a different construction upon it, he showed unusual spirit.

"Will you stand meek under such an affront?" said the two brothers. "Napoleon has made you inferior to your son." And locking his arms in theirs, before he had time to reflect, they haled him off to the palace, into which he stormed.

"What have I done?" he cried, "to merit this? To think that an infant is placed above me!"

"He couldn't wail more," said Napoleon, then stared, incredulous, as Louis, pacing the floor, lashed out with, "You shall not have him! I shall take him away! You shall not separate a father from his son!" and other reproaches, all crazy enough, until Napoleon, for once in his life retreated, crying, "Good God! what do they want now?" as he banged the door.

But exasperated as he was with all three brothers, again he relented, restoring them to their old places in the proposed succession. Still, this did not please Lucien. His love-child must have a place. Adamant now, the First Consul refused. Lucien wrote a note to the palace, then began to pack.

Napoleon did not show anger as he read that note: "I retire into Italy with nothing but hatred for you

in my heart." Long he sat there, staring into the dusk.

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There were other problems to set him staring and to hurry that march down the nave of Notre-Dame. Murat and a squadron of his dragoons had dashed over the border, right into the nest of Bourbon princes at Strasburg, had seized one and haled him to the walls of Paris, then to the dark dungeons of Vincennes. Rumors were on every tongue, and over the town hung that ominous atmosphere that preceded the Reign of Terror. Was the First Consul to emulate the regicides by shedding royal blood?

If such was his intention, his face betrayed no uneasiness the Sunday after the capture, as he listened to the Latin sonorities of the mass, inhaled the sweet fragrance of the censers, and watched the pale fingers of the priest call down a benison from high heaven. A benison on what? On an atrocious deed? Josephine wondered and was thoroughly frightened, Napoleon's face was so immobile and mask-like. And never had he silenced her so harshly as when she had questioned him at dawn, that morning.

The devious Savary head of the private police, had just left for Vincennes with Caulaincourt. A hasty court-martial would be held. Indeed, so Josephine had heard, the victim's grave had already been dug. Fouché had proved, at least to her husband's satisfaction, that the assassins who had so often attempted her husband's life, had been in the pay of England and these Bourbon princes. It was undoubtedly true. No wonder he had determined to

make an example of some one. But this Duke d'Enghien they had kidnapped, was youthful, ingenuous, well-liked. Fouché had probably forged the documents in this case—he was perfectly capable of it—that he might call down the wrath of Europe on his chief and strengthen the coalition against him. Thus far Josephine's intuitions led her, and very shrewdly; and so she foresaw disaster, an eternal infamy attached to that name she had taken at the civil magistrate's eight years before.

They were to dine at Malmaison. As they drove out through the country-side, every leaf and twig of which sparkled from the recent rains, Napoleon said not a word. In the late afternoon, however, he seemed to recover something of his spirits and played with the little Charles Napoleon on a marble bench behind a wind-break of cypress. In his lighter moments he was fond of practical jokes; had once pushed the stately Josephine into the breakers on the shore before all her *dames du palais*, and laughed when she emerged soaked. But now he played too boisterously; dangled the child on his boot, threw him up too high and made faces so grotesque that he frightened this nephew-step-grandson of his. Then he was non-plussed, for he liked children.

Joseph's cabriolet now swung up the long drive to the terrace of the château; and Josephine, recognizing him, went to meet him. For once there was accord, almost a *rapprochement*, between the factions.

"Is it true?" she asked.

"I am afraid so. They have dug his grave. With it Napoleon has dug that of his reputation."

"See what you can do then. I cannot sway him. You know what he is when his mind is made up."

All that day it seemed that vehicles were to come from Paris to disturb the calm of a peaceful Sunday and to prevent a conqueror from making scarlet history. Finally, in disgust, Napoleon shut himself in upstairs. Letizia, like Lucien, had already packed and left Paris; but she determined once more to plead with her son. This blood he would shed must not be on his hands.

Age had at last taken toll of Letizia. The iron-gray had come into the chestnut as the iron entered her soul. And though she was only fifty-four and promised to live to a hale old age if worry over her turbulent family did not kill her, her figure had harshened a little, and she sat bolt upright against the carriage seat, no longer the Roman matron with the rose complexion, but an austere, eagle-eyed, worldly-wise woman just beginning to show her age.

A short distance this side of Malmaison, she saw a rider, black against the sunset gold, slightly rising and falling in the rhythmic measures of a gallop. He reined in as he reached them at a fork of the highway, and, pointing with his riding-whip, called, "Take the other road!" Then, catching a glimpse of a lady behind the drawn shades, he bowed low and galloped on. In passing, Letizia was sure she recognized the strange young man with whom she had talked at Ajaccio long ago, and later at Montebello; but it was too late to call him back.

The granite of her sterling common sense had always been shot through with mica specks of eery supersti-

tions; and immediately she lost sight of the practical reason,—the heavy rains, that might have prompted the warning. She saw in his luminous features those of a supernatural messenger and, in his words, "Take the other road!"—so reminiscent of their old conversations—an admonition which she must convey, as though from heaven, to her son.

When her carriage drove under the port-cochère, Josephine shrank from greeting her mother-in-law. Still, she had force, this old lady. Perhaps she might influence her son. So, "You are welcome," she said.

"Thanks, Madame la Première Consul. Have you heard of this thing?"

"I have," returned her daughter-in-law sadly. "But no argument seems of any weight. Still, if you wish to see him, you will find him upstairs."

Not for worlds would Josephine now have knocked at that closed door. Letizia, however, did not falter, and when to his "Who is there?" she had answered "Your mother," she took his silence for assent and entered the room, finding him deep in his chair between walls lined with books, a bust of Cæsar on his desk, and ink-spots on the floor where he had flicked his pen. There were no lights in the room, save the twilight, and his eyes, she thought, were more deeply brooding than she had ever seen them before. At once she recalled that evening at Montebello when she had thought from his expression that he was doing violence to something deep within. And all he said now was, rather harshly, "You are welcome, signora, provided, like all women, you do not come to interfere."



"Seven years ago, my son," she said, taking the seat which in his moody detachment he did not offer, "I interfered, as I said, for the last time. To-night I break that promise. I am your mother and cannot stand silent while you do this thing. It means that you invite your downfall; that you will bear the curse of the whole world to your grave!"

Involuntarily he twitched at this as if she had hit on a hidden nerve of fear. Then, controlling himself, he turned.

"Seven years ago too I tried to explain things to you, though matters of State are not in a woman's province. I shall try once more. Attend!"

"You remember the attempt on my life in the Rue Sainte Nicaise? Very well. Did you know that there have been many attempts since? Quite right. These I thwarted; but I cannot thwart them forever. The Comte d'Artois, for one, has sixty assassins in Paris. Would you see your son murdered?"

It was difficult, the way he put it, and it was only a very thin surface of austerity that hid the mother's tenderness. Nevertheless she answered intrepidly:

"I would die for you, my son; but I would rather see you assassinated than an assassin yourself." For the moment she seemed crushed, then—"Surely there is some other way."

"There is no other way. I wish there were." He paused, thinking of another wakeful night by the sands of an Eastern sea. "I shall be damned for this as I was at Joppa and I shall be ruined if I weaken. But listen again: The King of England has his spies in France. On the

West coast the Duc de Berri has landed. Among them they have hatched a neat plot. I am to be kidnapped, they say, polite word for murder. But I have matched their craft with craft. La Touché palmed himself off as my foe and joined the conspirators. He has secured papers—they lie before me. And some of the generals, Moreau, Pichegru, are in the plot. So here I am, a ring of spies and traitors in Paris ready to spring the trap, de Berri already landed, and the Duc d'Enghien on the Rhine border eager to cross. So I forestall them and seize the duke. No longer will they dare to lay a hand on me. I shall strike terror to their hearts by his death. Thus perish, they will see, all the enemies of Napoleon!"

For a few swift seconds Letizia gazed on him. He was so little like the man she remembered, so indifferent then to his security, actually chafing at the guards his friends advised as a reasonable precaution. And his generals who thought they knew him well would have been amazed to see him sunk in this melancholy, though twice before it had attacked him—once in his adolescence when he had pondered on suicide, again in Italy when in a rage at his generals he had told them to take over the command and do better. Even Achilles could sulk in his tent. But this was the third and the most serious attack.

At last his mother spoke with such measured words that each seemed uttered out of a deep agony.

"But this duke is nothing but a boy. You are flesh of my flesh, Napoleon, and to say it, strikes me to the heart; but I am afraid your

decision comes somehow from your wish to be king."

"Who has suggested that, madame?"

"All Paris says it; and I can read you, my son."

"And if I am not crowned, what other course is there? They call us upstarts, *nouveaux riches*. You yourself should resent that, madame, as a Ramolino if not a Bonaparte. As long as I am consul only, they will conspire against my life. If I become emperor, with a dynasty established, they will recognize us at last and cease plotting to restore the Bourbons. It means security for France. If I fall, she will be helpless."

"Oh, my son, do you not count too much on yourself. God can raise up others."

"He has not appeared to," he returned dryly and a little scornfully.

"But can you not see? If you are content to reign as First Consul, a republican ruler, a just and enlightened one, your name will go down to be blessed for all generations. Already you have glory and achievements enough. It may be cursed—"

"It is good of you to prophesy, signora," he retorted sarcastically.

"I do not prophesy," she began; but even as she spoke, the bust of Cæsar, dislodged by some sudden movement of Napoleon, dropped to the floor to be shattered in pieces. It was the slightest of accidents, of course, but it did not lighten the mood of either of the Corsicans. They stared at the shards, then rapidly she went on:

"Oh, you must not tempt fate by accepting the crown or killing this

boy. Once more I plead with you, my son. If it would sway you, I would go down on my knees to you."

"Enough, signora"—but his voice was gentler. "I know you mean well; but my decision is irrevocable."

She rose and for a few heart-beats stood in the gathering gloom, tall and as unyielding as her son, her dark gown so lost in the shadows that he could see nothing of her but her white face and pleading eyes.

"Farewell," she said at last. "I go to Italy to-morrow."

"With Lucien?"

She nodded assent.

So bitter was he now at what he inwardly termed her defection, that he turned away.

She took one or two steps toward him, paused, then turned also and glided so softly out of the door that he did not know she had gone.

At six next day, the bells of the neighboring church broke on the morning air. He had been quite cynical at times about religion, professing it to be good for society, since it contented the poor, through immortal hope, with the present good fortunes of the rich. Again he had defended even orthodoxy quite warmly. The recent cynicisms may have been due to a love of argument, or they may have been proof of a growing materialism; but they were, in a way, only lip-service to skepticism. Never did he hear those bells without being stirred by childhood recollections—the mysteries of the altar, the sacrament, and the admonitions of his mother and that just old man, the archdeacon. He was stirred by more than mere esthetic sensations or the pathos of a youth one cannot recapture. And he was

moved now profoundly as he rose from his chair, hearing in ghastly counterpoint to the golden notes of the bells, sharp reports over a newly-made grave, a few leagues away.

A little earlier, a bewildered princeling had been taken from a dungeon, bidding his captors a courteous "Good morning!" and inquiring blithely where they were taking him. They led him down the staircase, followed by his dog, and through a postern into the dried-up moat, just as the sun rose. The sunshine was glorious, every twig and leaf on the plain seeming to reflect the light. Then he saw a heap of hastily piled up earth, a hollow beside it. He had his answer; he knew now where they were sending him. Still bewildered, he asked that his eyes be left unbound, as they stood him against the dripping walls, twelve long barrels pointing at his heart.

"Aim straight, messieurs!" he said gallantly.

They obeyed, though it is not easy to aim straight when one can see a handsome young face smiling bravely in the dawn.

The body tumbled. There was a sound of mattocks striking gravel. The earth fell, was heaped up. A little dog crawled toward it and whimpered.

And the shots and the sweet angelus on the morning air had been almost simultaneous. As the last bronze tongue grew still, Napoleon stirred in his chair and shivered. The fire had gone out.



Neither Lucien nor Letizia was present at the ceremony when they crowned her son emperor. The new

court painter David, painted her in; but that was an artistic white lie designed to please a ruler who might like to have any breach in the family healed, even pictorially.

This magniloquent event did not take place until December second, although he had been proclaimed in May. Meantime, Cadoudal, the leader of the great conspiracy, had been executed; Pichegru had strangled himself; and General Moreau had been sentenced to prison, but only for two years, later to be nobly pardoned by Napoleon, though this old rival had aimed at his life.

In preparing for the new order, there had been considerable trouble about titles. As marshals of the new empire, Murat, Masséna, Lannes, Berthier, Ney, Bernadotte, Augereau, Lefèvre, Mortier, Jourdan, had to be content; so also the two associate consuls, Cambacérès and Lebrun, as arch-chancellor and arch-treasurer respectively. "Prince Joseph, Grand Elector" sounded well, and "Prince Louis, Grand Constable of the Empire." Even Eugène was a prince and old Bacciochi a senator.

But Elisa, Pauline and Caroline made quite a to-do when, at a dinner at Malmaison, Duroc announced each of the relatives by the new labels. Now Pauline had reveled in being called the Princess Borghese when Josephine was still only Madame la Première Consul. But now Josephine was Her Majesty, Hortense not only a princess, but *Her Imperial Highness*—a distinction with a difference—while Caroline was only Madame la Maréchale and Eliza plain Madame la Sénatrice. All through the dinner they sat eyeing like Cinderella's stepsisters, their

sister-in-law. All through dinner, too, Napoleon twitted them, preceding every sentence addressed to the Beauharnais faction by the new titles, and looking at the three sisters slyly to see the effect.

It was too much. With the sweets Caroline fainted. And the imperial brother, as he bent over her, whispered, "As usual, you women have won!" and aloud to the guests, "Do not fear, *Her Imperial Highness* will come to." Then, as Caroline opened her eyes at the magic words, he called, with finger raised in mock admonition, "Announce them all over again, Duroc. And remember now, it is *Their Imperial Highnesses*. One slip and off with your head!"

Weather did not favor the coronation festivities. It was a cold and frosty morning when Constant pulled aside the draperies to awaken the one-time *sous-lieutenant*. So chill it was in fact that Constant advised an extra pair of cassimere, as he began slowly to array his impatient master, first with the exquisite cambric shirt which he patted lovingly, silk stockings embroidered in gold with diamond buckles to clasp them; and in prompt order, the white silk breeches and braces studded with gems. Then he got down on his knees to lace the velvet boots, Napoleon keeping up a running fire of comment the while, "What! gems even on the braces! The devil! Odiotte and Marguerette will send us a pretty bill!" but nevertheless not altogether displeased.

And now came the white velvet vest with diamonds in the buttons, and an under-coat of crimson velvet faced with white and caught with double clasps of diamonds. Finally,

for this man who once had polished his own boots in Auxonne, the coronation robe, crimson, too, lined with white velvet and studded all over with gold bees and held by a golden cord and tassel! The little valet staggered under it, for it weighed eighty pounds.

Thus bravely arrayed in clothes costing more than a million francs, not counting the crowns awaiting him in the cathedral, he emerged with Josephine from the great entrance where the rabble had slain the Swiss Guard, and entered a coach, drawn like Cinderella's, by eight cream-colored horses. He, however, had no thought of the glory vanishing when his clock struck twelve.

And it looked like a pumpkin, this wondrous vehicle with its great gilt body surmounted by four gold eagles supporting a gold crown. Waist-high, the panels were painted in pink and blue; the rest was glass, so that the royal pair might be viewed, as is the casket in an undertaker's wagon.

The old pope, who had been inveigled into crowning him, Napoleon had sent on ahead, in a gilt coach preceded by a man on a mule bearing the historic cross. Then from the Carrousel by the Rue St. Honoré, where at Vendémiaire he had ordered his guns to speak, the great man rode on, led by Murat's beet-red plumes and clattering dragoons clad in green with glittering casques, through lines of red and blue foot-soldiers stationed at the sides to keep the populace back. Windows along the way rented at three hundred francs, and from cornice and ledge and pinnacle everywhere streamed gaudy-colored paper flowers and festoons. They had culled out a

holiday, but one not nearly so exciting as those the crowd remembered. The tumbrel had given way to a pumpkin-coach.

The head of the long colorful serpent at last reached the bishop's palace by the Seine, which stood at the left of the cathedral with its dark towers, its peaceful saints and leering gargoyles; then the imperial party passed in.

The musicians, three hundred of the choicest from opera and stage, now struck up; the organ rolled; and to royal marches composed for the occasion, the conqueror took his place on a dais reached by twenty-two steps. Under a crimson canopy, close to a great throne he stood, facing a glittering throng of jeweled head-dresses, and gilt epaulets, that filled the farthest recess of aisle and nave and vault with myriad sparkles.

On one side of him stood the arch-treasurer with the arch-chancellor; on the right, Joseph and Louis, princes both, and grand elector and grand constable respectively. Josephine stood a step below, surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting.

The mass was now performed, the orotund Latin rolled out; the organ boomed; the crimson coronation robe was placed on the conqueror's shoulders; the laurel crown, the sword and scepter sparkling with brilliants, were blessed, and a frail old man reached out pale hands for the crown. But brusquely, for such a ceremony, Napoleon seized the golden laurel and placed it on his brow. At once a murmur ran through the crowd—one might have sworn it was from the ghostlike lips of the sainted who once had trod these aisles and whose likenesses now stood sculptured in stone

—a protest at this throwing down the gage to the established traditions, this gesture signifying that at last the Church was inferior to the State and to that little man from Corsica. But at once his eyes swept the throng. Here were the lordliest and the most powerful in the land, but *his* creatures. "Defy me," the glance said, "who dare!" And one understood why *they* were below those steps and *he* above them.

But now it was Josephine's turn. The *dames-du-palais* and ladies-in-waiting had carefully robed her in silver brocade, studded, too, with gold bees, a little smaller than Napoleon's, while wrists, shoulder and brow were scintillant with richly gemmed bracelets, clasps and bandeau.

Softly lustrous were the dark blue eyes; and in bearing, Marie Antoinette was not more queenly. But Josephine had this advantage; she showed no hauteur, but a soft glance for every one there. All were glad to see her happy, all but Savary and cynical Talleyrand and Fouché, ever the death's-head at any banquet—and her emperor's relatives.

She herself was very happy. The shoals of divorce seemed to be safely past. Had not her lord and master said to his brothers when they urged the parting—oh, she had heard it—one can hear everything in a palace—"Why, now that I am powerful, should I put her away? My wife is now a good wife who does no harm. She will merely play at being empress, have diamonds, fine dresses, the trifles that will please her age. To give her these is but bare justice. I will not make her unhappy. She shall be crowned if it costs me one hundred thousand men!" Perhaps,



like the Hindu holy men, he thought thus to acquire merit; perhaps he protested too much. At any rate the lady was reassured.

She too had a coronation robe, the train entrusted to Hortense and, by a cruel irony, to Eliza, Pauline and Caroline. It was very heavy with its seed pearls, but the fair Hortense held up her corner nobly. Not so the three sisters. When the signal came for Josephine's advance to the dais, they held fast, budging not an inch; their weight on the robe almost tore the diamond clasps from Josephine's shoulder and ludicrously threw her out of step. Napoleon from the throne saw the trick, glanced at his sisters—once—and the procession moved forward.

Before him Josephine knelt, and with some affection he placed the diadem, topped by a gold ball and studded with emeralds and amethysts, on the chestnut coils. He appeared genuinely glad so to please her, and not a little proud of the impression she made.

It was the only softly human note in the proceedings. Sometimes he himself appeared bored, stifling a yawn; and when the pope had poured the sacred oil on his head and it ran down his cheek, he brushed it away in irritation. He had been eager to hurry through with it all, perhaps because something was missing. His mother and Lucien were not there to see him crowned.

Whatever the reason, he did hurry the gorgeous spectacle just a little; and at last he marched out to more hosannas, and rode back in the pumpkin-coach to slip off his robes and don with a sigh of relief the green

grenadier's coat. Then, while the people danced and the trees of the Tuileries flashed their innumerable colored lights and fireworks made bright the bridges of the Seine, he sat down at his desk and planned a campaign. He was glad to be at work. It had been a splendid fête-day, but it had been just a little cold.



In another capital, far to the South, sat a woman who in spite of her toil-worn hands, looked as though she should have been an empress. Advance descriptions of the grand festivities had come to her, but she had not been impressed. Indeed she had called it a circus, though sorrow lay in her heart. So that afternoon, while the organ rolled and *Te Deums* rose to high heaven, she counted her hoard of gold louis. Not for herself, but for this imperious son who rode so high over the world, but who one day might have need of them and of her.

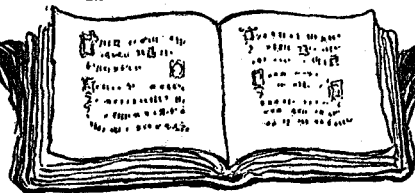
And now it was night. The mists rose, beautiful in the moonlight streaming over the seven hills, but very deadly. By the beams she could see broken pillars where other Cæsars had trod. Where were they? Where was he, her son? Already his story was told, though he knew it not.

Thus they sat, leagues apart, the two who should have been together—his pen still scratching, while the valet replaced the burned-out tapers,—she by the window, watching those ghostly legions wheeling and counter-marching through the mists and down the broad pathway of the moon. . . . She drew her shawl around her and fell once more to counting.

The End

# *The* READING ROOM

## *Joseph Anthony*



“WRITING  
novels  
is such

a delightful occu-

pation!” said a charming lady who came to see Joseph Conrad one afternoon.

Conrad thought otherwise, for he set the good lady down as a torturer, and wrote to his friend John Galsworthy, in 1909:

“I sit twelve hours at the table, sleep six, and worry the rest of the time, feeling age creeping on and looking at those I love.”

And that is the note that recurs most frequently in the close-packed two volumes of G. Jean-Aubry’s “Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters.”

Essentially, the causes of Conrad’s lasting gloom were inherited. His father was exiled and broken by the Russian crown for setting down unpermitted dreams of Russian freedom; his fragile mother forfeited her life by accepting the sentence for herself as well. Conrad Korzeniowski all his life was as homesick as his parents had been, and found no cure for what ailed him even when he became Joseph Conrad and a British subject. He did learn to speak of “foreigners” with the proper tone of English condescension, and to address his friends as “dear old boy”; but he never felt his roots in the place where he was living—not even in Poland when he returned, for then

it was much too late.

An equally important part of

the Conrad heritage was an inability to compromise. He was a born irreconcilable, looking at the world through standards of absolute honor, faith and loyalty, and therefore finding it bad. But he had a sense of humor—a sardonic one.

Conrad’s “delightful occupation” of writing novels, brought him, after he had written thirteen books, the sum of five pounds as a year’s royalties on all of them. It looked very much as though he would have to take comfort in what posterity might do for him. But on that subject he had expressed his opinion in a letter to Cunninghame Graham, twenty-two years before:

“Posterity will be busy thieving, lying, selling its little soul for sixpence (from the noblest motives) and will remember no one, except perhaps one or two quite too atrocious mountebanks.”

When prosperity came later, Conrad was racked by gout and the fear that his powers were slipping. Fortune brought him some favors, but always like the cow that yielded a large pailful of milk and proceeded to kick it over.

But Jean-Aubry points out that in the last analysis Conrad was his own destiny. Born of an inland people,