

***IMBERT  
DE SAINT-AMAND***



***THE HAPPY DAYS  
OF THE EMPRESS  
MARIE LOUISE***

**Imbert de Saint-Amand**

# **The Happy Days of the Empress Marie Louise**

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**THE HAPPY DAYS**

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**OF**

**THE EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE**

**INTRODUCTION.**

In 1814, while Napoleon was banished in the island of Elba, the Empress Marie Louise and her grandmother, Marie Caroline, Queen of Naples, happened to meet at Vienna. The one, who had been deprived of the French crown, was seeking to be put in possession of her new realm, the Duchy of Parma; the other, who had fled from Sicily to escape the

yoke of her pretended protectors, the English, had come to demand the restitution of her kingdom of Naples, where Murat continued to rule with the connivance of Austria. This Queen, Marie Caroline, the daughter of the great Empress, Maria Theresa, and the sister of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, had passed her life in detestation of the French Revolution and of Napoleon, of whom she had been one of the most eminent victims. Well, at the very moment when the Austrian court was doing its best to make Marie Louise forget that she was Napoleon's wife and to separate her from him forever, Marie Caroline was pained to see her granddaughter lend too ready an ear to their suggestions. She said to the Baron de Méneval, who had accompanied Marie Louise to Vienna: "I have had, in my time, very good cause for complaining of your Emperor; he has persecuted me and wounded my pride,—I was then at least fifteen years old,—but now I remember only one thing,—that he is unfortunate." Then she went on to say that if they tried to keep husband and wife apart, Marie Louise would have to tie her bedclothes to her window and run away in disguise. "That," she exclaimed, "that's what I should do in her place; for when people are married, they are married for their whole life!"

If a woman like Queen Marie Caroline, a sister of Marie Antoinette, a queen driven from her throne by Napoleon, could feel in this way, it is easy to understand the severity with which those of the French who were devoted to the Emperor, regarded the conduct of his ungrateful wife. In the same way, Josephine, in spite of her occasionally frivolous conduct, has retained her popularity, because she was

tender, kind, and devoted, even after she was divorced; while Marie Louise has been criticised, because after loving, or saying that she loved, the mighty Emperor, she deserted him when he was a prisoner. The contrast between her conduct and that of the wife of King Jerome, the noble and courageous Catherine of Wurtemberg, who endured every danger, and all sorts of persecutions, to share her husband's exile and poverty, has set in an even clearer light the faults of Marie Louise. She has been blamed for not having joined Napoleon at Elba, for not having even tried to temper his sufferings at Saint Helena, for not consoling him in any way, for not even writing to him. The former Empress of the French has been also more severely condemned for her two morganatic marriages,—one with Count Neipperg, an Austrian general and a bitter enemy of Napoleon, the other with Count de Bombelles, a Frenchman who left France to enter the Austrian service. Certainly Marie Louise was neither a model wife nor a model widow, and there is nothing surprising in the severity with which her contemporaries judged her, a severity which doubtless history will not modify. But if this princess was guilty, more than one attenuating circumstance may be urged in her defence, and we should, in justice, remember that it was not without a struggle, without tears, distress, and many conscientious scruples, that she decided to obey her father's rigid orders and become again what she had been before her marriage,—simply an Austrian princess.

It must not be forgotten that the Empress Marie Louise, who was in two ways the grandniece of Queen Marie Antoinette, through her mother Maria Theresa of Naples,



daughter of Queen Marie Caroline, and through her father the Emperor Francis, son of the Emperor Leopold II., the brother of the martyred queen, had been brought up to abhor the French Revolution and the Empire which succeeded it. She had been taught from the moment she left the cradle, that France was the hereditary enemy, the savage and implacable foe, of her country. When she was a child, Napoleon appeared to her against a background of blood, like a fatal being, an evil genius, a satanic Corsican, a sort of Antichrist. The few Frenchmen whom she saw at the Austrian court were émigrés, who saw in Napoleon nothing but the selfish revolutionist, the friend of the young Robespierre, the creature of Barras, the defender of the members of the Convention, the man of the 13th of Vendémiaire, the murderer of the Duke of Enghien, the enemy of all the thrones of Europe, the author of the treachery of Bayonne, the persecutor of the Pope, the excommunicated sovereign. Twice he had driven Austria to the brink of ruin, and it had even been said that he wished to destroy it altogether, like a second Poland. The young archduchess had never heard the hero of Austerlitz and Wagram spoken of, except in terms inspired by resentment, fear, and hatred. Could she, then, in a single day learn to love the man who always had been held up before her as a second Attila, as the scourge of God? Hence, when she came to contemplate the possibility of her marriage with him, she was overwhelmed with surprise, terror, and repulsion, and her first idea was to regard herself as a victim to be sacrificed to a vague Minotaur. We find this word "sacrifice" on the lips of the Austrian statesmen who most

warmly favored the French alliance, even of those who had counselled and arranged the match. The Austrian ambassador in Paris, the Prince of Swartzenberg, wrote to Metternich, February 8, 1810, "I pity the princess; but let her remember that it is a fine thing to bring peace to such good people!" And Metternich wrote back, February 15, to the Prince of Swartzenberg, "The Archduchess Marie Louise sees in the suggestion made to her by her August father, that Napoleon may include her in his plans, only a means of proving to her beloved father the most absolute devotion. She feels the full force of the sacrifice, but her filial love will outweigh all other considerations." Having been brought up in the habit of severe discipline and passive obedience, she belonged to a family in which the Austrian princesses are regarded as the docile instruments of the greatness of the Hapsburgs. Consequently, she resigned herself to following her father's wishes without a murmur, but not without sadness. What Marie Louise thought at the time of her marriage she still thought in the last years of her life. General de Trobriand, the Frenchman who won distinction on the northern side in the American civil war, told me recently how painfully surprised he was when once at Venice he had heard Napoleon's widow, then the wife of Count de Bombelles, say, in speaking of her marriage to the great Emperor, "I was sacrificed."

Austria was covered with ruins, its hospitals were crowded with wounded French and Austrians, and in the ears of Viennese still echoed the cannon of Wagram, when salvos of artillery announced not war, but this marriage. The memories of an obstinate struggle, which both sides had

regarded as one for life or death, was still too recent, too terrible to permit a complete reconciliation between the two nations. In fact, the peace was only a truce. To facilitate the formal entry of Napoleon's ambassador into Vienna, it had been necessary hastily to build a bridge over the ruins of the walls which the French had blown up a few months earlier, as a farewell to the inhabitants. Marie Louise, who started with tears in her eyes, trembled as she drew near the French territory, which Marie Antoinette had found so fatal.

Soon this first impression wore off, and the young Empress was distinctly flattered by the amazing splendor of her throne, the most powerful in the world. And yet amid this Babylonian pomp, and all the splendor, the glory, the flattery, which could gratify a woman's heart, she did not cease to think of her own country. One day when she was standing at a window of the palace of Saint Cloud, gazing thoughtfully at the view before her, M. de Méneval ventured to ask the cause of the deep revery in which she appeared to be sunk. She answered that as she was looking at the beautiful view, she was surprised to find herself regretting the neighborhood of Vienna, and wishing that some magic wand might let her see even a corner of it. At that time Marie Louise was afraid that she would never see her country again, and she sighed. What glory or greatness can wipe out the touching memories of infancy?

Doubtless Napoleon treated his wife with the utmost regard and consideration; but in the affection with which he inspired her there was, we fancy, more admiration than tenderness. He was too great for her. She was fascinated,

but troubled by so great power and so great genius. She had the eyes of a dove, and she needed the eyes of an eagle, to be able to look at the Imperial Sun, of which the hot rays dazzled her. She would have preferred less glory, less majesty, fewer triumphs, with her simple and modest tastes, which were rather those of a respectable citizen's wife than of a queen. Her husband, amid his courtiers, who flocked about him as priests flock about an idol, seemed to her a demi-god rather than a man, and she would far rather have been won by affection than overwhelmed by his superiority.

It is not to be supposed, however, that Marie Louise was unhappy before the catastrophes that accompanied the fall of the Empire. It was in perfect sincerity that she wrote to her father in praise of her husband, and her joy was great when she gave birth to a child, who seemed a pledge of peace and of general happiness. Let us add that the Emperor never had an occasion to find fault with her. Her gentleness, reserve, and obedience formed the combination of qualities which her husband desired. He had never imagined an Empress more exactly to his taste. When she deserted him, he was more ready to excuse and pity her than to cast blame upon her. He looked upon her as the slave and victim of the Viennese court. Moreover, he was in perfect ignorance of her love for the Count of Neipperg, and no shadow of jealousy tormented him at Saint Helena. "You may be sure," he said a few days before his death, "that if the Empress makes no effort to ease my woes, it is because she is kept surrounded by spies, who never let my sufferings come to her ears; for Marie Louise is virtue itself." A

pleasant delusion, which consoled the final moments of the great man, whose last thoughts were for his wife and son.

We fancy that the Emperor of Austria was sincere in the protestations of affection and friendship which he made to Napoleon shortly after the wedding. He then entertained no thoughts of dethroning or fighting him. He had hopes of securing great advantage from the French alliance, and he would have been much surprised if any one had foretold to him how soon he would become one of the most active agents in the overthrow of this son-in-law to whom he expressed such affectionate feelings. In 1811 he was sincerely desirous that the King of Rome should one day succeed Napoleon on the throne of the vast empire. At that time hatred of France had almost died out in Austria; it was only renewed by the disastrous Russian campaign. The Austrians, who could not wholly forget the past, did not love Napoleon well enough to remain faithful to him in disaster. Had he been fortunate, the hero of Wagram would have preserved his father-in-law's sympathy and the Austrian alliance; but being unfortunate, he lost both at once. Unlike the rulers of the old dynasties, he was condemned either to perpetual victory or to ruin. He needed triumphs instead of ancestors, and the slightest loss of glory was for him the token of irremediable decay; incessant victory was the only condition on which he could keep his throne, his wife, his son, himself. One day he asked Marie Louise what instructions she had received from her parents in regard to her conduct towards him. "To be wholly yours," she answered, "and to obey you in everything." Might she not have added, "So long as you are not unfortunate"?

But who at the beginning of that fatal year, 1812, could have foretold the catastrophes which were so near? When Marie Louise was with Napoleon at Dresden, did he not appear to her like the arbiter of the world, an invincible hero, an Agamemnon, the king of kings? Never before, possibly, had a man risen so high. Sovereigns seemed lost amid the crowd of courtiers. Among the aides-de-camp was the Crown Prince of Prussia, who was obliged to make special recommendations to those near him to pay a little attention to his father-in-law, the Emperor of Austria. What power, what pride, what faith in his star, when, drawing all Europe after him, he bade farewell to his wife May 29, 1812, to begin that gigantic war which he thought was destined to consolidate all his greatness and to crown all his glories! But he had not counted on the burning of Moscow: there is in the air a zone which the highest balloons cannot pierce; once there, ascent means death. This zone, which exists also in power, good fortune, glory, as well as in the atmosphere, Napoleon had reached. At the height of his prosperity he had forgotten that God was about to say to him: Thou shalt go no further.

At the first defeat Marie Louise perceived that the brazen statue had feet of clay. Malet's conspiracy filled her with gloomy thoughts. It became evident that the Empire was not a fixed institution, but a single man; in case this man died or lived defeated, everything was gone. December 12, 1812, the Empress went to her bed in the Tuileries, sad and ill. It was half-past eleven in the evening. The lady-in-waiting, who was to pass the night in a neighboring room, was about to lock all the doors when suddenly she heard

voices in the drawing-room close by. Who could have come at that hour? Who except the Emperor? And, in fact, it was he, who, without word to any one, had just arrived unexpectedly in a wretched carriage, and had found great difficulty in getting the palace doors opened. He had travelled incognito from the Beresina, like a fugitive, like a criminal. As he passed through Warsaw he had exclaimed bitterly and in amazement at his defeat, "There is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous." When he burst into his wife's bedroom in his long fur coat, Marie Louise could not believe her eyes. He kissed her affectionately, and promised her that all the disasters recounted in the twenty-ninth bulletin should be soon repaired; he added that he had been beaten, not by the Russians, but by the elements. Nevertheless, the decadence had begun; his glory was dimmed; Marie Louise began to have doubts of Napoleon. His courtiers continued to flatter him, but they ceased to worship him. A dark cloud lay over the Tuileries. The Empress had but a few days to pass with her husband. He had been away for nearly six months, from May 29 till December 12, 1812, and he was to leave again April 15, 1813, to return only November 9. The European sovereigns could not have continued in alliance with him even if they had wished it, so irresistible was the movement of their subjects against him. After Leipsic everything was lost; that was the signal of the death struggle, which was to be long, terrible, and full of anguish. Europe listened in terror to the cries of the dying Empire. But it was all over. The sacred soil of France was invaded. January 25, 1814, at three in the morning, the hero left the Tuileries to oppose the invaders.

He kissed his wife and his son for the last time. He was never to see them again. In all, Napoleon had passed only two years and eight months with Marie Louise; she had had hardly time enough to become attached to him. Napoleon's sword was broken; he arrived before Paris too late to save the city, which had just capitulated, and the foreigners were about to make their triumphal entrance. Could a woman of twenty-two be strong enough to withstand the tempest? Would she be brave enough, could she indeed remain in Paris without disobeying Napoleon? Was not flight a duty for the hapless sovereign? The Emperor had written to his brother, King Joseph: "In no case must you let the Empress and the King of Rome fall into the enemy's hands. Do not abandon my son, and remember that I had rather see him in the Seine than in the hands of the enemies of France. The lot of Astyanax, a prisoner among the Greeks, has always seemed to me the unhappiest in history." But, alas! in spite of the great Emperor's precautions, the King of Rome was condemned by fate to be the modern Astyanax, and Marie Louise was not as constant as Andromache.

The allied forces drew near, and there was no more time for flight. March 29, 1814, horses and carriages had been stationed in the Carrousel since the morning. At seven o'clock Marie Louise was dressed and ready to leave, but they could not abandon hope; they wished still to await some possible bit of good news which should prevent their leaving,—an envoy from Napoleon, a messenger from King Joseph. The officers of the National Guard were anxious to have the Empress stay. "Remain," they urged; "we swear to defend you." Marie Louise thanked them through her tears,



but the Emperor's orders were positive; on no account were the Empress and the King of Rome to fall into the enemy's hands. The peril grew. Ever since four o'clock Marie Louise had kept putting off the moment of leaving, in expectation that something would turn up. Eleven struck, and the Minister of War came, declaring there was not a moment to lose. One would have thought that the little King of Rome, who was just three years old, knew that he was about to go, never to return. "Don't go to Rambouillet," he cried to his mother; "that's a gloomy castle; let us stay here." And he clung to the banisters, struggling with the equerry who was carrying him, weeping and shouting, "I don't want to leave my house; I don't want to go away; since papa is away, I am the master." Marie Louise was impressed by this childish opposition; a secret voice told her that her son was right; that by abandoning the capital, they surrendered it to the Royalists. But the lot was cast, and they had to leave. A mere handful of indifferent spectators, attracted by no other feeling than curiosity, watched the flight of the sovereign who, four years before, had made her formal entrance into this same palace of the Tuileries under a triumphal arch, amid noisy acclamations. There was not a tear in the eyes of the few spectators; they uttered no sound, they made no movement of sympathy or regret; there was only a sullen silence. But one person wept, and that was Marie Louise. When she had reached the Champs Elysées, she cast a last sad glance at the palace she was never to see again. It was not a flight, but a funeral.

The Empress and the King of Rome took refuge at Blois, where there appeared a faint shadow of Imperial

government. On Good Friday, April 8, Count Shouvaloff reached Blois with a detachment of Cossacks, and carried Marie Louise and her son to Rambouillet, where the Emperor of Austria was to join them. What Napoleon had feared was soon realized.

April 16, the Emperor of Austria was at Blois. Marie Louise, who two years before had left her father, starting on her triumphal journey to Prague, amid all form of splendor and devotion, was much moved at seeing him again, and placed the King of Rome in his arms, as if to reproach him for deserting the child's cause. The grandfather relented, but the monarch was stern: did he not soon say to Marie Louise: "As my daughter, everything that I have is yours, even my blood and my life; as a sovereign, I do not know you"? The Russian sentinels at the entrance of the castle of Rambouillet were relieved by Austrian grenadiers. The Empress of the French changed captors; she was the prisoner no longer of the Czar's soldiers, but of her own father. Her conjugal affection was not yet wholly extinct, and she reproached herself with not having joined Napoleon at Fontainebleau; but her scruples were soon allayed by the promise that she should soon see her husband again at Elba. She was told that the treaty which had just been signed gave her, and after her, her son, the duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla; that the King of Rome was henceforth the hereditary Duke of Parma; that if she had duties as a wife, she also had duties as a mother; that she ought to gain the good-will of the powers, and assure her child's future. They added that she ought to give her husband time to establish himself at Elba, and that

meanwhile she would find in Vienna, near her loving parents, a few weeks of moral and physical rest, which must be very necessary after so many emotions and sufferings. Marie Louise, who had been brought up to give her father strict obedience, regarded the advice of the Emperor of Austria as commands which were not to be questioned, and April 23 she left Rambouillet with her son for Vienna.

Did the dethroned Empress carry away with her a pleasant memory of France and the French people? We do not think so; and, to be frank, was what had just happened likely to give her a favorable idea of the country she was leaving? Could she have much love for the people who were fastening a rope to pull down the statue of the hero of Austerlitz from its pedestal, the Vendôme column? When her father, the Emperor Francis I., had been defeated, driven from his capital, overwhelmed with the blows of fate, his misfortunes had only augmented his popularity; the more he suffered, the more he was loved. But for Napoleon, who was so adored in the day of triumph, how was he treated in adversity? What was the language of the Senate, lately so obsequious and servile? The men on whom the Emperor had literally showered favors, called him contemptuously Monsieur de Bonaparte. What did they do to save the crown of the King of Rome, whose cradle they had saluted with such noisy acclamations? Were not the Cossacks who went to Blois after the Empress rapturously applauded by the French, in Paris itself, upon the very boulevards? Did not the marshals of the Empire now serve as an escort to Louis XVIII.? Where were the eagles, the flags, and the tricolored cockades? When Napoleon was passing through Provence

on his way to take possession of his ridiculous realm of Elba, he was compelled to wear an Austrian officer's uniform to escape being put to death by Frenchmen; the imperial mantle was exchanged for a disguise. It is true that Marie Louise abandoned the French; but did not the French abandon her and her son after the abdication of Fontainebleau; and if this child did not become Napoleon II., is not the fault theirs? And did she not do all that could be demanded of her as regent? Can she be accused of intriguing with the Allies; and if at the last moment she left Paris, was it not in obedience to her husband's express command? She might well have said what fifty-six years later the second Emperor said so sadly when he was a prisoner in Germany: "In France one must never be unfortunate." What was then left for her to do in that volcano, that land which swallows all greatness and glory, amid that fickle people who change their opinions and passions as an actress changes her dress? Where Napoleon, with all his genius, had made a complete failure, could a young, ignorant woman be reasonably expected to succeed in the face of all Europe? Were her hands strong enough to rebuild the colossal edifice that lay in ruins upon the ground?

Such were the reflections of Marie Louise as she was leaving France. The moment she touched German soil, all the ideas, impressions, feelings of her girlhood, came back to her, and naturally enough; for were there not many instances in the last war, of German women, married to Frenchmen, who rejoiced in the German successes, and of French women, married to Germans, who deplored them?

Marriage is but an incident; one's nature is determined at one's birth. In Austria, Marie Louise found again the same sympathy and affection that she had left there. There was a sort of conspiracy to make her forget France and love Germany. The Emperor Francis persuaded her that he was her sole protector, and controlled her with the twofold authority of a father and a sovereign. She who a few days before had been the Empress of the French, the Queen of Italy, the Regent of a vast empire, was in her father's presence merely a humble and docile daughter, who told him everything, obeyed him in everything, who abdicated her own free will, and promised, even swore, to entertain no other ideas or wishes than such as agreed with his.

Nevertheless, when she arrived at Vienna, Marie Louise had by no means completely forgotten France and Napoleon. She still had Frenchmen in her suite; she wrote to her husband and imagined that she would be allowed to visit him at Elba, but she perfectly understood all the difficulties of the double part she was henceforth called upon to play. She felt that whatever she might do she would be severely criticised; that it would be almost impossible to secure the approval of both her father and her husband. Since she was intelligent enough to foresee that she would be blamed by her contemporaries and by posterity, was she not justified in lamenting her unhappy lot? She, who under any other conditions would have been an excellent wife and mother, was compelled by extraordinary circumstances to appear as a heartless wife and an indifferent mother. This thought distressed Marie Louise, who at heart was not thoroughly contented with herself. She wrote, under date of

August 9, 1814: "I am in a very unhappy and critical position; I must be very prudent in my conduct. There are moments when that thought so distracts me that I think that the best thing I could do would be to die."

When Napoleon returned from Elba, the situation of Marie Louise, so far from improving, became only more difficult. She had no illusions about the fate that awaited her audacious husband, who was unable to contend, single-handed, against all Europe. She knew better than any one, not only that he had nothing to hope from the Emperor of Austria, his father-in-law, but that in this sovereign he would find a bitter, implacable foe. As to the Emperor Alexander, he swore that he would sacrifice his last ruble, his last soldier, before he would consent to let Napoleon reign in France. Marie Louise knew too well the feeling that animated the Congress at Vienna, to imagine that her husband had the slightest chance of success. She was convinced that by returning from Elba, he was only preparing for France a new invasion, and for himself chains. Since she was a prisoner of the Coalition, she was condemned to widowhood, even in the lifetime of her husband. She cannot then be blamed for remaining at Vienna, whence escape was absolutely impossible.

Marie Louise committed one great error; that, namely, of writing that inasmuch as she was entirely without part in the plans of the Emperor Napoleon, she placed herself under the protection of the Allies,—Allies who at that very moment were urging the assassination of her husband, in the famous declaration of March 13, 1815, in which they said: "By breaking the convention, which established him on the

island of Elba, Bonaparte has destroyed the only legal title on which his existence depended. By reappearing in France, with plans of disturbance and turmoil, he has, by his own act, forfeited the protection of the laws, and has shown to the world that there can be no peace or truce with him as a party. The Powers consequently declare that Napoleon Bonaparte has placed himself outside of all civil and social relations, and that as an enemy and disturber of the world's peace, he exposes himself to public vengeance." April 16, at the moment when the processions designed to pray for the success of the Austrian armies, were going through the streets of Vienna to visit the Cathedral and the principal churches, the Empress of Austria dared to ask the former Empress of the French to accompany the processions with the rest of the court; but Marie Louise rejected the insulting proposal. The 6th of May next, when M. de Méneval, who was about to return to France, came to bid farewell and to receive her commands, she spoke to this effect to the faithful subject who was soon to see Napoleon: "I am aware that all relations between me and France are coming to an end, but I shall always cherish the memory of my adopted home.... Convince the Emperor of all the good I wish him. I hope that he will understand the misery of my position.... I shall never assent to a divorce, but I flatter myself that he will not oppose an amicable separation, and that he will not bear any ill feeling towards me.... This separation has become imperative; it will in no way affect the feelings of esteem and gratitude that I preserve." Then she gave to M. de Méneval a gold snuff-box, bearing his initials in diamonds, as a memento, and left him, to hide the emotion

by which she was overcome. Her emotion was not very deep, and her tears soon dried. In 1814 she had met the man who was to make her forget her duty towards her illustrious husband. He was twenty years older than she, and always wore a large black band to hide the scar of a wound by which he had lost an eye. As diplomatist and as a soldier he had been one of the most persistent and one of the most skilful of Napoleon's enemies. General the Count of Neipperg, as he called himself, had been especially active in persuading two Frenchmen, Bernadotte and Murat, to take up arms against France. Since 1814 he had been most devoted to Marie Louise, and he felt or pretended to feel for her an affection on which she did not fear to smile. She admitted him to her table; he became her chamberlain, her advocate at the Congress of Vienna, her prime minister in the Duchy of Parma, and after Napoleon's death, her morganatic husband. He had three children by her,—two daughters (one of whom died young; the other married the son of the Count San Vitale, Grand Chamberlain of Parma) and one son (who took the title of Count of Montenuovo and served in the Austrian army). Until his death in 1829 the Count of Neipperg completely controlled Marie Louise, as Napoleon had never done.

After Waterloo, every day dimmed Marie Louise's recollections of France. The four years of her reign—two spent in the splendor of perpetual adoration, two in the gloom of disasters culminating in final ruin—were like a distant dream, half a golden vision, half a hideous nightmare. It was all but a brief episode in her life. She thoroughly deserved the name of "the Austrian," which had



been given unjustly to Marie Antoinette; for Marie Antoinette really became a Frenchwoman. The Duchess of Parma—for that was the title of the woman who had worn the two crowns of France and of Italy—lived more in her principality than in Vienna, more interested in the Count of Neipperg than in the Duke of Reichstadt. While her son never left the Emperor Francis, she reigned in her little duchy. But the title was to expire at her death; for the Coalition had feared to permit a son of Napoleon to have an hereditary claim to rule over Parma. Yet Marie Louise cannot properly be called a bad mother. She went to close the eyes of her son, who died in his twenty-second year, of consumption and disappointment.

By this event was broken the last bond which attached Napoleon's widow to the imperial traditions. In 1833 she was married, for the third time, to a Frenchman, the son of an émigré in the Austrian service. He was a M. de Bombelles, whose mother had been a Miss Mackan, an intimate friend of Madame Elisabeth, and had married the Count of Bombelles, ambassador of Louis XVI. in Portugal, and later in Venice, who took orders after his wife's death and became Bishop of Amiens under the Restoration. Marie Louise, who died December 17, 1847, aged fifty-six, lived in surroundings directly hostile to Napoleon's glory. Her ideas in her last years grew to resemble those of her childhood, and she was perpetually denouncing the principles of the French Revolution and of the liberalism which pursued her even in the Duchy of Parma. France has reproached her with abandoning Napoleon, and still more perhaps for having

given two obscure successors to the most famous man of modern times.

If Marie Louise is not a very sympathetic figure, no story is more touching and more melancholy than that of her son's life and death. It is a tale of hope deceived by reality; of youth and beauty cut down in their flower; of the innocent paying for the guilty; of the victim marked by fate as the expiation for others. One might say that he came into the world only to give a lasting example of the instability of human greatness. When he was at the point of death, worn out with suffering, he said sadly, "My birth and my death comprise my whole history." But this short story is perhaps richer in instruction than the longest reigns. The Emperor's son will be known for many ages by his three titles,—the King of Rome, Napoleon II., and the Duke of Reichstadt. He had already inspired great poets, and given to philosophers and Christians occasion for profound thoughts. His memory is indissolubly bound up with that of his father, and posterity will never forget him. Even those who are most virulent against Napoleon's memory, feel their wrath melt when they think of his son; and when at the Church of the Capuchins, in Vienna, a monk lights with a flickering torch the dark tomb of the great captain's son, who lies by the side of his grandfather, Francis II., who was at once his protector and his jailer, deep thoughts arise as one considers the vanity of political calculations, the emptiness of glory, of power, and of genius.

Poor boy! His birth was greeted with countless thanksgivings, celebrations, and joyous applause. Paris was beside itself when in the morning of March 20, 1811, there

sounded the twenty-second report of a cannon, announcing that the Emperor had, not a daughter, but a son. He lay in a costly cradle of mother-of-pearl and gold, surmounted by a winged Victory which seemed to protect the slumbers of the King of Rome. The Imperial heir in his gilded baby-carriage drawn by two snow-white sheep beneath the trees at Saint Cloud was a charming object. He was but a year old when Gérard painted him in his cradle, playing with a cup and ball, as if the cup were a sceptre and the ball were the world, with which his childish hands were playing. When on the eve of the battle of Moskowa, Napoleon was giving his final orders for the tremendous struggle of the next day, a courier, M. de Bausset, arrived suddenly from Paris, bringing with him this masterpiece of Gérard's; at once the General forgot his anxieties in his paternal joy. "Gentlemen," said Napoleon to his officers, "if my son were fifteen years old, you may be sure that he would be here among this multitude of brave men, and not merely in a picture." Then he had the portrait of the King of Rome set out in front of his tent, on a chair, that the sight of it might be an added excitement to victory. And the old grenadiers of the Imperial Guard, the veterans with their grizzly moustaches,—the men who were never to abandon their Emperor, who followed him to Elba, and died at Waterloo,—heroes, as kind as they were brave, actually cried with joy as they gazed at the portrait of this boy whose glorious future they hoped to make sure by their brave deeds.

But what a sad future it was! Within less than two years Cossacks were the escort of the King of Rome. When the Coalition made him a prisoner, he was forever torn from his

father. Napoleon, March 20, 1815, on this return from Elba, re-entered triumphantly the Palace of the Tuileries as if by miracle, but his joy was incomplete. March 20 was his son's birthday, the day he was four years old, and the boy was not there; his father never saw him again. At Vienna the little prince seemed the victim of an untimely gloom; he missed his young playmates. "Any one can see that I am not a king," he said; "I haven't any pages now."

The King of Rome had lost the childish merriment and the talkativeness which had made him very captivating. So far from growing familiar with those among whom he was thrown, he seemed rather to be suspicious and distrustful of them. During the Hundred Days the private secretary of Marie Louise left her at Vienna to return to Napoleon in France. "Have you any message for your father?" he asked of the little prince. The boy thought for a moment, and then, as if he were watched, led the faithful officer up to the window and whispered to him, very low, "You will tell him that I always love him dearly."

In spite of the many miles that separated them, the son was to be a consolation to his father. In 1816 the prisoner at Saint Helena received a lock of the young prince's hair, and a letter which he had written with his hand held by some one else. Napoleon was filled with joy, and forgot his chains. It was a renewal of the happiness he had felt on the eve of Moskowa, when he had received the portrait of the son he loved so warmly. Once again he summoned those who were about him and, deeply moved, showed to them the lock of hair and the letter of his child.

For his part, the boy did not forget his father. In vain they gave him a German title and a German name, and removed the Imperial arms with their eagle; in vain they expunged the Napoleon from his name,—Napoleon, which was an object of terror to the enemies of France. His Highness, Prince Francis Charles Joseph, Duke of Reichstadt, knew very well that his title was the King of Rome and Napoleon II. He knew that in his veins there flowed the blood of the greatest warrior of modern times. He had scarcely left the cradle when he began to show military tastes. When only five, he said to Hummel, the artist, who was painting his portrait: "I want to be a soldier. I shall fight well. I shall be in the charge." "But," urged the artist, "you will find the bayonets of the grenadiers in your way, and they will kill you perhaps." And the boy answered, "But shan't I have a sword to beat down the bayonets?" Before he was seven he wore a uniform. He learned eagerly the manual of arms; and when he was rewarded by promotion to the grade of sergeant, he was as proud of his stripes as he would have been of a throne. His father's career continually occupied his thoughts and filled his imagination with a sort of ecstasy.

At Paris the fickle multitude soon forgot the son of the Emperor. In 1820 the capital saluted the birth of the Duke of Bordeaux as it had saluted that of the King of Rome. A close relationship united the two children who represented two such distinct parties; their mothers were first-cousins on both their fathers' and their mothers' side. The Duchess of Berry, mother of the Duke of Bordeaux, was the daughter of the King of Naples, Francis I., son of King Ferdinand IV. and Queen Marie Caroline; and her mother was the Princess

Marie Clementine, daughter of the Emperor Leopold II. The Emperor Francis, father of the Empress Marie Louise, was himself the son of Leopold II.; his wife was Princess Marie Thérèse of Naples, daughter of Queen Marie Caroline and aunt of the Duchess of Berry. The King of Rome and the Duke of Bordeaux were thus in two ways second-cousins. July 22, 1821, at Schoenbrunn, in the same room where, eleven years later, in the same month and on the same day of the month, he was to breathe his last, the child who had been the King of Rome learned that his father was dead. This news plunged him into deep grief. He had been forbidden the name of Bonaparte or Napoleon, but he was allowed to weep. The Duke of Reichstadt and his household were allowed to wear mourning for the exile of Saint Helena.

In justice to the Emperor Francis it must be said that he showed great affection for his grandson, whom he kept always near him, in his chamber and in his study, and that he hid from him neither Napoleon's misfortunes nor his successes. "I desire," he told Prince Metternich, "that the Duke of Reichstadt shall respect his father's memory, that he shall take example from his firm qualities and learn to recognize his faults, in order to shun them and be on his guard against their influence. Speak to the prince about his father as you should like to be spoken about to your own son. Do not hide anything from him, but teach him to honor his father's memory." Military drill, manoeuvres, strategy, the study of great generals, especially of Napoleon, formed the young prince's favorite occupations.

So long as the elder branch of the Bourbons reigned in France, the Duke of Reichstadt never thought of seizing his