

NAPOLION'S MERCY.

Napoleon was conversing with Josephine, when one of his officers entered and announced a young woman from Lyons. "What is her business with me?"

"Some petition," answered de Merville, the officer.

"Show her into my presence," said Napoleon.

The officer reappeared with the lady leaning on his arm. "Who are you, as could be discerned through the thick veil, was very beautiful. She trembled as she approached the door.

"Mademoiselle," whispered a guide kindly pressing her hand, "take courage, but answer promptly whatever questions the Emperor proposes, he detests hesitation." Then ushering her into a spacious apartment, he bowed and retired.

The trembling girl, perceiving Napoleon, on whom her foudard brows depended, forced herself to utter a few words. "I am Josephine," she exclaimed, in a voice choked with emotion, "Madame, I ask for mercy and pardon."

"She could articulate no more. Josephine stepped forward from her partial concealment, and then approaching the group, contributed by her sympathizing words of encouragement, to restore the courage of the young petitioner, and her husband's.

"Your petition, Mademoiselle," said he. Henrietta Armond (for that was her name), looked imploringly at the Emperor, and exclaimed:

"Ah, sire, I ask pardon for Louis Delmarre, who is condemned to be shot to-morrow. Oh, grant him your most royal pardon."

"As a monarch, I cannot give the pardon of which he interrupted her with—

"A despot, madam, he has twice deserted,—No, he cannot be an example for the rest of the nation."

"But the cause of his desertion," cried Henrietta in agony, "is who was compelled to join the army against his will."

"What were the causes of his desertion," interrupted Napoleon.

"Two weeks since," replied Henrietta, "she at length recovered. But she had fled to her mother, sire, as her dear husband had, and lodged, day and night, to behold her son again. Louis knew that to rebel or to flee was impossible. His mind was filled with one thought—that if he might close his eyes forever, ere they rested on a son she loved so fondly."

"Did she die," asked the Empress with interest.

"No, Madam," replied Henrietta, "she is at length recovered. But she had fled to her mother, sire, as her dear husband had, and lodged, day and night, to behold her son again. Louis knew that to rebel or to flee was impossible. His mind was filled with one thought—that if he might close his eyes forever, ere they rested on a son she loved so fondly."

"Mademoiselle," said Napoleon, apparently softened,—this was the second occasion—namely the first—on which he had been so moved.

"It was—that he heard that I was to marry General Foy, which I detest as much as he detests."

"Are you his sister, that he feels so great an interest in your fate?" asked the Emperor.

"O, my sire, said Henrietta, her lovely cheeks glowing with the blush of the rose, "I am only his cousin."

"Ah! only his cousin," repeated Napoleon, gazing at Josephine with a half-approving smile.

"Oh, sire," cried Henrietta, "think only of the anguish of his widowed mother, when she sees that the streets are the scene of the use of his death. What," she continued, "can I do to save?"

Napoleon approached the weeping girl. She hastily looked up and dried her tears. "Mademoiselle," said he, "I will give your life to save his; would you die, could Louis Delmarre be restored to life, liberty, and his mother's?"

"I would," she started back, deathly pale, gazing fixedly at the Emperor for a moment, then turning away, she buried her face in her hands.

"After a silence of some minutes, Henrietta looked up at the Emperor, and then resting upon her face. "I am willing," she said in a low voice.

"Napoleon looked at her in surprise, as if he had anticipated no ready an answer to his proposal.

"I will see you again," said he, "in the presence of the Emperor, to sign the agreement as I shall direct."

As soon as the door closed upon the fair petitioner, Napoleon walked to the window, and, as Josephine was leaning and gazing, "I saw how it is: Louis Delmarre is the lover of this young girl. True to woman's nature she has been ready to sacrifice her life for his."

"How strong must be the love she bears for him," said the Empress.

"Ah," responded he, "I have a mind to do just as much for a wretched man. Much I doubt whether she will give her life for him. Nevertheless, I will see."

"Sire," cried Josephine, "you are not

erious. Louis can be pardoned without the death of Henrietta.

Napoleon rose nearer the window; they conversed in a low tone.

Henrietta stood alone in a magnificent apartment, and she felt as if she were intensely absorbed in reverie; a small folded paper was tightly grasped in her hand. On it were traced these words: "A despot is condemned by his own laws to die; but I will give my life to wish Delmarre restored to liberty, the means are in your power. Ere the day dawns, he may be on his way to join his mother, whom he so much loves."

"Ah! do not I love him, too?" murmured the young Henrietta. Pressing her hands upon her eyes, she still in the usual heat of feeling, she paced the apartment. The door opened, and the Cavalier de Merville entered. He paused ere he articulated "Mademoiselle."

"I am ready," replied Henrietta, "my decision is made."

De Merville appeared to comprehend the import of her words. He looked upon her in reverence as well as admiration, as she stood with the high resolve impressed upon her beautiful brow.

"I follow me, Mademoiselle," said he. They traversed long corridors, and numerous stairs, and entered a superb apartment, and descending a staircase, quickly reached an outer court communicating with the garden house. Exteriorly, this Henrietta was ushered by her guide into a small apartment, where she was soon left to herself.

She sat down on the edge of one of the tables to which Louis below ed. On the register a large plumed cap. Henrietta comprehended it in a moment. Quickly hastening herself in, she saw that she stood before the mirror, and her beautiful brown tresses in a knot, and placed the cap upon her head. She almost uttered a cry at the sight.

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