

exhaustible fund of good-humour, Madame Beauharnois was formed to be an ornament to society. Barras, the Thermidorien hero, himself an ex-noble, was fond of society, desirous of enjoying it on an agreeable scale, and of washing away the dregs which Jacobinism had mingled with all the dearest interests of life. He loved show, too, and pleasure, and might now indulge both without the risk of falling under the suspicion of incivism which, in the Reign of Terror, would have been incurred by any attempt to intermingle elegance with the enjoyments of social intercourse. At the apartments he occupied, as one of the Directory, in the Luxemburg Palace, he gave its free course to his natural taste, and assembled an agreeable society of both sexes. Madame Tallien and her friend formed the soul of these assemblies, and it was supposed that Barras was not insensible to the charms of Madame Beauharnois,—a rumour which was likely to arise, whether with or without foundation.

When Madame Beauharnois and General Bonaparte became intimate, the latter assures us, and we see no reason to doubt him, that although the lady was two or three years older than himself,* yet still being in the full bloom of youth and beauty, and extremely agreeable in her manners, he was induced, solely by her personal charms, to make her an offer of his hand, heart and fortunes—little supposing, of course, to what a pitch the latter were to arise.

Although he himself is said to have been a fatalist, believing in destiny and in the influence of his star, he knew nothing, probably, of the prediction of a negro sorceress, who, while Marie Joseph was but a child, prophesied she should rise to a dignity greater than that of a queen, yet fall from it before her death.† This

* Bonaparte was then in his twenty-sixth year, Josephine gave herself in the marriage contract for twenty-eight.

† A lady of high rank, who happened to live for some time in the same convent

was one of those vague auguries, delivered at random by fools or impostors, which the caprice of fortune sometimes matches with a corresponding and conforming event. But without trusting to the African sibyl's prediction, Bonaparte may have formed his match under the auspices of ambition as well as love. The marrying Madame Beauharnois was a mean of uniting his fortune with those of Barras and Tallien, the first of whom governed France as one of the Directors; and the last, from talents and political connexions, had scarcely inferior influence. He had already deserved well of them for his conduct on the Day of the Sections, but he required their countenance to rise still higher; and without derogating from the bride's merits, we may suppose her influence in their society corresponded with the views of her lover. It is, however, certain, that he always regarded her with peculiar affection; that he relied on her fate, which he considered as linked with and strengthening his own: and reposed, besides, considerable confidence in Josephine's tact and address in political business. She had at all times the art of mitigating his temper, and turning aside the hasty determinations of his angry moments, not by directly opposing, but by gradually parrying and disarming them. It must be added to her great praise, that she was always a willing and often a successful advocate in the cause of humanity.

They were married 9th of March, 1796; and the dowry of the bride

at Paris, where Josephine was also a pensioner or boarder, heard her mention the prophecy, and told it herself to the author, just about the time of the Italian expedition, when Bonaparte was beginning to attract notice. Another clause is usually added to the prediction—that the party whom it concerned should die in an hospital, which was afterwards explained as referring to Malmaison. This the author did not hear from the same authority. The lady mentioned used to speak in the highest terms of the simple manners and great kindness of Madame Beauharnois.