

Let us return to Marceau and an entire family which his name protected against even Carrier himself. His was a reputation of republicanism so pure, that a suspicion had not dared to light on his mother or sisters. This is why one of them a young girl of sixteen, as if ignorant of what was passing around her, loved and was beloved, and the mother of Marceau, timid and fearful as a mother, seeing a second protector in a husband, hastened as much as she could the marriage that was about to take place soon, when Marceau and the young Vendean arrived at Nantes. This return at such a time caused double joy.

Blanche was handed over to the two young girls, who on embracing her instantly became her friends, for there is an age at which every young girl thinks she finds an eternal friend in the friend she has known for an hour. They left the room together, a circumstance almost as important as a marriage, occupied their attention : a woman's toilet ; Blanche was not to wear a man's habit any longer.

Soon they brought her back decked in a part of the wardrobe of each, for they had obliged her to put on the gown of one and the shawl of the other. Foolish young girls ! it is true that among all three they only numbered the years of Marceau's mother who was still beautiful.

When Blanche returned, the young general advanced a few steps to meet her, and stopped astonished. Under her first costume, he had scarcely remarked her celestial beauty and the graces she had resumed with her woman's habit. It is true she had exerted all her power to appear to advantage ; for one instant, before her mirror she had forgotten, war, Vendee and carnage : This is because the most ingenuous soul has its coquetry when it begins to love, and wishes to please the object.

Marceau made an effort to speak, but could not pronounce a word ; Blanche smiled and extended her hand to him joyously, for she saw she looked as beautiful as she had wished.

At night the affianced lover of Marceau's sister came, and as all love, from self-love to maternal love is egotistical, there was one house in the town of Nantes and one alone