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QUEENS OF LOVE.

Josephine, Who Awoke Undying Love in the Heart of the Great Napoleon.

(Pearson's Weekly.)

A woman with the manners of a kitten and the morals of a cat—that is how Josephine, the woman who fascinated Napoleon Bonaparte, has been described.

Not a clever nor a beautiful woman, Josephine was one of the most fascinating women who ever lived, won love, but gambled with it, and, like most gamblers, she lost.

Josephine was born in the Island of Martinique, in the West Indies, in a hot, moist climate, where white people are obliged to live a more or less languorous existence, and which causes women to develop more rapidly than in any other part of the world.

She fell in love when she was only ten years of age, and although one might smile at this, and put it down to foolish "puppy love," the great fact stands out that Josephine never forgot. She always cherished most tenderly the memory of her boy lover.

He was an English lad, the son of an exiled royalist, William by name, but the surname remains a mystery. He is always written as "William de K." For three years these two children loved each other in idyllic fashion. They were happy, but Josephine's parents were watching, and they did not intend that their daughter should make the mistake of marrying a nobody, for as such they regarded William de K. Exactly what happened we do not know, except that the boy had to go away, and with tearful eyes and grief-stricken hearts these two children held each other's hands and swore to be true.

Josephine meant it. Her rebellious little heart beat fast, and she swore to her English lover that she would wait for him, and he swore to return to her and make her his bride.

He meant it, too. He was loyal to Josephine all his life, and he never forgot his first and only love.

Josephine, alas! believed him false, for she never received his impassioned letters, pleading with her to remember their idyl. They were all intercepted by Josephine's mother. Madame was planning for her daughter to marry the son of the Marquis de Beauharnais, who had been Governor of Martinique. The Marquis was a courtly old gentleman. In his veins flowed some of the bluest blood of France, but he was poor—like many more of the old nobility of that time—and the parents of Josephine were rich. So the "marriage of convenience" pleased

all—except poor little sixteen-year-old Josephine. Alexander de Beauharnais was of very good birth and education, a man of very different calibre from Josephine. He was clever, and, after the rather brilliant women of Paris, with whom he had been accustomed to mix, there is no doubt that he found Josephine a welcome change.

She, however, having really loved, hated the idea of marrying him, but, like a well-brought-up daughter of France of that period, the idea of disobeying her parents never entered her head. She obeyed—as all French girls were trained to do—especially in the matter of marriage. It is fortunate for young girls of France that to-day conditions are changing!

Then William returned to the island, wondering why he had not heard from his girl-sweetheart. To his dismay he found she was betrothed to another man. The lovers met, Josephine discovered how her mother had intercepted William's letters, but this did not alter her. Her boy lover pleaded, caressed, cajoled, but all in vain. She was a French girl; she must obey her parents. That was final.

He never saw her again, after he left Martinique broken-hearted, but William never forgot her—and never allowed himself to lose touch with her. When, years afterwards, he heard she was dying, the English heart hastened to her side to say good-bye to the one love of his life, but he arrived too late.

The girl was married soon afterwards, and went with her husband to Paris—which made a very welcome change to her after her island home. The city of luxury filled her with delight, and, as is usual with those who have lived in lonely places all through early life, she quickly became very extravagant. She flattered about, a gay butterfly, loving ease and luxury; and the young officer, finding that his brother officers admired his young wife, admired her all the more himself. Josephine had a way of attracting attention and holding it. Her father-in-law, the old Marquis, became her devoted slave, her mother-in-law loved her, and the young Alexander thought he saw in Josephine a woman who would help him rise in life.

But Josephine was like a cat. She adored ease, loved to bask in the sunshine, and was not at all inclined to exert herself. So when her husband outlined his plans and thought to win her aid, she merely smiled and held her peace. She was not going to exert herself to lift her man to power. She might be a seductive woman, but she was inclined to use her arts only for her own ends.

So the two drifted apart, as they were bound to do, having nothing in common, and with no love to bind them. And Alexander began to neglect his home and his wife.

The old Marquis was indignant at his son's conduct, and, later on, when Alexander added insult to injury by accusing Josephine of faithlessness, her father-in-law espoused her cause. And rightly, for Josephine had been a faithful wife. But Alexander, who grew tired of her, and finally, after he had vainly tried to establish legal proceedings against her, Josephine returned to Martinique.

Back there she thought wistfully of her childhood's love, but all was in vain now, and she had to make the best of her broken life.

News from France reached her after a time—awful news. The Revolution had begun. Paris was gay Paris no longer. It was bathed in blood. The awful guillotine was at work, and anyone with noble blood was not likely to escape its knife. De Beauharnais was of blue blood, and Josephine felt a shadow of fear creep over her as she heard what was happening. For although he had been a bad husband, he was still her husband.

In Paris Alexander looked back over the annals of his past and was very sorry for the way he had treated his wife. Perhaps Alexander felt he was doomed. At all events, he wrote a pathetic plea to Josephine for forgiveness and a reconciliation. She had suffered but she hurried back to France to stand by his side as his wife. She was helpless to save him, however, and he perished by the guillotine in 1794.

Those were dreadful days. A fury, a thirst for blood, possessed the mind of the people, who had revolted after years of oppression. Thousands of suspected persons were crowded into prisons, and every afternoon, carts laden with unhappy men and women, who had been condemned for imaginary offences, trundled along the street to the place of death.

Josephine herself only narrowly escaped, but, being a woman, and possessed of charm, and a knowledge of how to fascinate men, she was saved, and her new life began. She tasted all to the full, yet life was never safe in those hazardous times, even when the life of a woman depended on the whim of a man who held himself to be a patriot.

But reaction came at last. France turned. The leaders of the revolution were sent to the scaffold, and the reign of terror ended. Napoleon Bonaparte, "the little general," was made Commandant of Paris. He ordered disarmament; and all citizens were bound to give up every weapon they possessed. Amongst the rest came young Eugene de Beauharnais, son of Josephine, carrying the sword of his dead father, to whom he had been deeply attached.

The Corsican commandant, who had his romantic side, saw the lad's tears as he gave up his father's sword and understood. He gave back the sword, and "by special order of the commandant" young Eugene was allowed to keep it.

Next day Josephine came in person. The Corsican commandant, who had the general immediately fell in love

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with her. She, worldly wise by this time, sated with so-called men's love; weary of caresses, but calculating to the last degree, saw that she had awakened passion in this man, and although she did not return that passion, she pretended to care, and she managed to deceive Napoleon into believing his love was returned. Their marriage took place before a Paris registrar on March 9th, 1796, and Josephine found herself the wife of one of the greatest men the world has ever known.

To him Josephine seemed the sweetest and most desirable of women, beautiful and true. He was in love, deeply, passionately in love, and his letters to her breathe devotion in every line. Written by the camp fire, when absent from her, they reveal a strong man's love, wonderful, compelling, fiery, yet very tender. He was a great man—one of the greatest who ever lived—and what he might have been and what he might have done had he had a good woman to help him one can only vaguely surmise.

It is true he forgave her everything and she was crowned Empress of the French, but he was a bitterly disillusioned man, and he never forgot. Then Josephine began to understand the greatness of his nature, the splendour of his passion. Too late she learned to love the man she had played with all these years. He had to choose between dreams of Empire and the woman he loved, and Napoleon chose Empire.

Josephine had borne him no child, and Napoleon needed an heir to carry

on his dreams of a mighty dynasty such as the world had never seen, so, in 1809, he published his decision to divorce Josephine for the good of France.

"I have nothing but kindness in my heart for her, who for thirteen years has been my wife," he wrote, and the Senate solemnly annulled the act of marriage. Josephine retired to La Malmaison, and it was there she died.

To La Malmaison came her husband's lover, William de K., but too late. Josephine, the fascinating, wayward, wilful, petted, luxury-loving, little daughter of fortune, had passed away. She grieved greatly when she heard of Napoleon's abdication, and some months later, when Napoleon sought out her physician and asked what had caused her death, he was told: "She, it was sorrow and anxiety over your Majesty's fallen fortunes."

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NEW YORK, Sept. 14. The two masted schooner H. M. Gardner, from Nova Scotia port, was brought into harbour to-day by the dry navy boat Taylor, and one hundred cases of liquor with fifty-six thousand dollars in gold were taken to the Customs House. The Gardner was seized last night off Scotland Light.

By Bud Fisher

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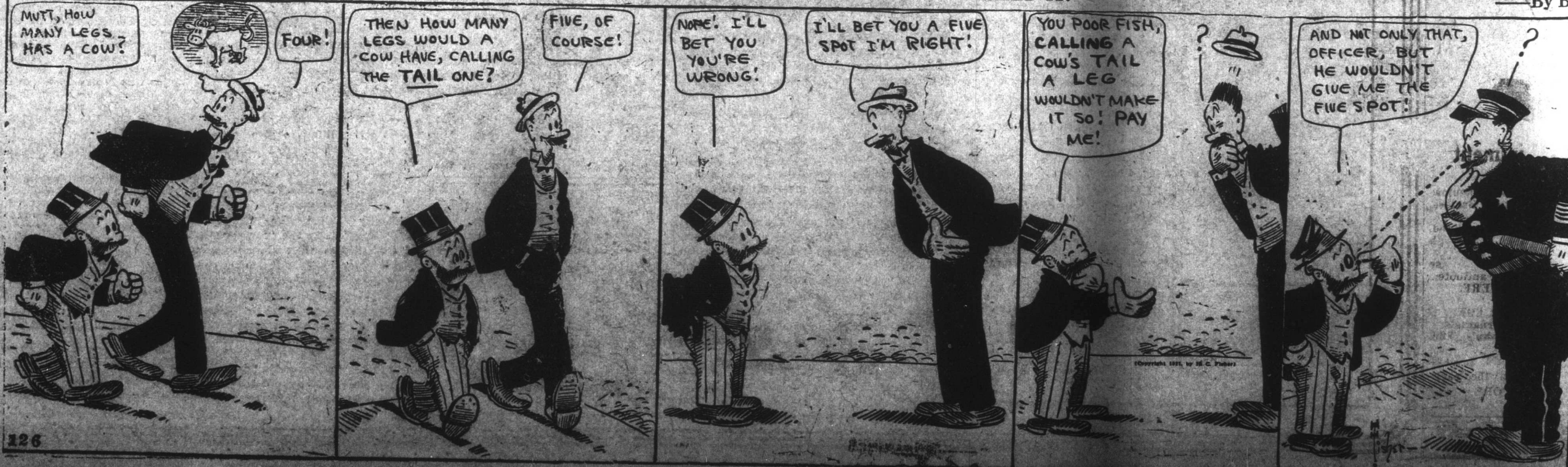
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