Chapter 44

CHANGE OF RESIDENCE

That same day, the First Consul, left alone with Bourrienne, dictated the following order, addressed to the Consulate guard and to the army at large:

> Washington is dead! That great man fought against tyranny. He consolidated the liberty of America. His memory will ever be dear to the French people, to all free men in both hemispheres, but especially to the French soldiers, who, like Washington and his soldiers, have fought for Liberty and Equality. Consequently, the First Consul orders that the flags and banners of the Republic shall be hung with crepe for ten days.

But the First Consul did not intend to confine himself to this order of the day.

Among the means he took to facilitate his removal from the Luxembourg to the Tuileries was one of those fêtes by which he knew, none better, how to amuse the eyes and also direct the minds of the spectator. This fête was to take place at the Invalides, or, as they said in those days, the Temple of Mars. A bust of Washington was to be crowned, and the flags of Aboukir were to be received from the hands of General Lannes.

It was one of those combinations which Bonaparte thoroughly understood--a flash of lightning drawn from the contact of contrasting facts. He presented the great man of the New World, and a great victory of the old; young America coupled with the palms of Thebes and Memphis.

On the day fixed for the ceremony, six thousand cavalry were in line from the Luxembourg to the Invalides. At eight o'clock, Bonaparte mounted his horse in the main courtyard of the Consular palace; issuing by the Rue de

Tournon he took the line of the quays, accompanied by a staff of generals, none of whom were over thirty-five years of age.

Lannes headed the procession; behind him were sixty Guides bearing the sixty captured flags; then came Bonaparte about two horse's-lengths ahead of his staff.

The minister of war, Berthier, awaited the procession under the dome of the temple. He leaned against a statue of Mars at rest, and the ministers and councillors of state were grouped around him. The flags of Denain and Fontenoy, and those of the first campaign in Italy, were already suspended from the columns which supported the roof. Two centenarian "Invalids" who had fought beside Maréchal Saxe were standing, one to the right and one to the left of Berthier, like caryatides of an ancient world, gazing across the centuries. To the right, on a raised platform, was the bust of Washington, which was now to be draped with the flags of Aboukir. On another platform, opposite to the former, stood Bonaparte's armchair.

On each side of the temple were tiers of seats in which was gathered all the elegant society of Paris, or rather that portion of it which gave its adhesion to the order of ideas then to be celebrated.

When the flags appeared, the trumpets blared, their metallic sounds echoing through the arches of the temple,

Lannes entered first. At a sign from him, the Guides mounted two by two the steps of the platform and placed the staffs of the flags in the holders prepared for them. During this time Bonaparte took his place in the chair,

Then Lannes advanced to the minister of war, and, in that voice that rang out so clearly on the battlefield, crying "Forward!" he said:

"Citizen minister, these are the flags of the Ottoman army, destroyed before your eyes at Aboukir. The army of Egypt, after crossing burning deserts, surviving thirst and hunger, found itself before an enemy proud of his numbers and his victories, and believing that he saw an easy prey in our troops, exhausted by their march and incessant combats. He had yet to learn that the French soldier is greater because he knows how to suffer than because he knows how to vanquish, and that his courage rises and augments in danger. Three thousand Frenchmen, as you know, fell upon eighteen thousand barbarians, broke their ranks, forced them back, pressed them between our lines and the sea; and the terror of our bayonets is such that the Mussulmans, driven to choose a death, rushed into the depths of the Mediterranean.

"On that memorable day hung the destinies of Egypt, France and Europe, and they were saved by your courage,

"Allied Powers! if you dare to violate French territory, and if the general who was given back to us by the victory of Aboukir makes an appeal to the nation--Allied Powers! I say to you, that your successes would be more fatal to you than disasters! What Frenchman is there who would not march to victory again under the banners of the First Consul, or serve his apprenticeship to fame with him?"

Then, addressing the "Invalids," for whom the whole lower gallery had been reserved, he continued in a still more powerful voice:

"And you, brave veterans, honorable victims of the fate of battles, you will not be the last to flock under the orders of him who knows your misfortunes and your glory, and who now delivers to your keeping these trophies won by your valor. Ah, I know you, veterans, you burn to sacrifice the half of your remaining lives to your country and its freedom!"

This specimen of the military eloquence of the conqueror of Montebello was received with deafening applause. Three times the minister of war endeavored to make reply; and three times the bravos cut him short. At last, however, silence came, and Berthier expressed himself as follows:

"To raise on the banks of the Seine these trophies won on the banks of the Nile; to hang beneath the domes of our temples, beside the flags of Vienna, of Petersburg, of London, the banners blessed in the mosques of Byzantium and Cairo; to see them here, presented by the same warriors, young in years, old in glory, whom Victory has so often crowned--these things are granted only to Republican France.

"Yet this is but a part of what he has done, that hero, in the flower of his age covered with the laurels of Europe, he, who stood a victor before the Pyramids, from the summits of which forty centuries looked down upon him while, surrounded by his warriors and learned men, he emancipated the native soil of art and restored to it the lights of civilization.

"Soldiers, plant in this temple of the warrior virtues those ensigns of the Crescent, captured on the rocks of Canopus by three thousand Frenchmen from eighteen thousand Ottomans, as brave as they were barbarous. Let them bear witness, not to the valor of the French soldier--the universe itself resounds to that--but to his unalterable constancy, his sublime devotion. Let the sight of these banners console you, veteran warriors, you, whose bodies, gloriously mutilated on the field of honor, deprive your courage of other exercise than hope and prayer. Let them proclaim from that dome above us, to all the enemies of France, the influence of genius, the value of the heroes who captured them; forewarning of the horrors of war all those who are deaf to our offers of peace. Yes, if they will have war, they shall have it--war, terrible and unrelenting!

"The nation, satisfied, regards the Army of the East with pride.

"That invincible army will learn with joy that the First Consul is watchful of its glory. It is the object of the keenest solicitude on the part of the Republic. It will hear with pride that we have honored it in our temples, while awaiting the moment when we shall imitate, if need be, on the fields of Europe, the warlike virtues it has displayed on the burning sands of Africa and Asia.

"Come, in the name of that army, intrepid general, come in the name of those heroes among whom you now appear, and receive an embrace in token of the national gratitude.

"And in the moment when we again take up our arms in defence of our independence (if the blind fury of kings refuses the peace we offer), let us cast a branch of laurel on the ashes of Washington, that hero who freed America from the yoke of our worst and most implacable enemy. Let his illustrious shade tell us of the glory which follows a nation's liberator beyond the grave!"

Bonaparte now came down from his platform, and in the name of France was embraced by Berthier.

M. de Fontanes, who was appointed to pronounce the eulogy on Washington, waited courteously until the echoes of the torrent of applause, which seemed to fall in cascades through the vast amphitheatre, had died away. In the midst of these glorious individualities, M. de Fontanes was a curiosity, half political, half literary. After the 18th Fructidor he was proscribed with Suard and Laharpe; but, being perfectly hidden in a friend's house, and never going out except at night, he managed to avoid leaving France. Nevertheless, an accident, impossible to foresee, had betrayed him. He was knocked down one night on the Place du Carrousel by a runaway horse, and was recognized by a policeman, who ran to his assistance. But Fouché, who was at once informed, not only of his presence in France, but also of his actual hiding-place, pretended to know nothing of him.

A few days after the 18th Brumaire, Maret, who became later the Duc de Bassano, Laplace, who continued to be simply a man of science, and Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely, who died mad, spoke to the First Consul of M. de Fontanes and of his presence in Paris,

"Present him to me," replied the First Consul simply.

M. de Fontanes was presented to Bonaparte, who, recognizing his supple nature and the unctuous flattery of his eloquence, chose him to deliver the eulogy on Washington, and perhaps something of his own at the same time.

M. de Fontanes' address was too long to be reported here; all that we shall say about it is, that it was precisely what Bonaparte desired.

That evening there was a grand reception at the Luxembourg. During the ceremony a rumor was spread that the First Consul contemplated removing to the Tuileries. Persons who were either bold or curious ventured on a few words to Josephine. She, poor woman, who still saw before her the tumbrel and the scaffold of Marie Antoinette, had an instinctive horror of all that might connect her with royalty; she therefore hesitated to reply and referred all questions to her husband.

Then another rumor began to be bruited about which served as a counterpoise to the former. Murat, it was said, had asked the hand of Mademoiselle Caroline Bonaparte in marriage. But this marriage was not without its obstacles; Bonaparte had had a quarrel, lasting over a year, with the man who aspired to the honor of becoming his brother-in-law. The cause of this quarrel will seem rather strange to our readers.

Murat, the lion of the army; Murat, whose courage had become proverbial; Murat, who might well have been taken by a sculptor as a model for the god of war; Murat, on one occasion, when he must have slept ill or breakfasted badly, had a moment of weakness.

It happened before Mantua, in which city Wurmser, after the battle of Rivoli, was forced to shut himself up with twenty-eight thousand men; General Miollis, with four thousand only, was investing the place. During a sortie attempted by the Austrians, Murat, at the head of five hundred men, received an order to charge three thousand. Murat charged, but feebly. Bonaparte, whose aide-de-camp he then was, was so irritated that he would not suffer him to remain about him. This was a great blow to Murat, all the

more because he was at that time desirous of becoming the general's brother-in-law; he was deeply in love with Caroline Bonaparte.

How had that love come about? It can be told in two words. Perhaps those who read our books singly are surprised that we sometimes dwell on certain details which seem somewhat long drawn out for the book in which they appear. The fact is, we are not writing isolated books, but, as we have already said, we are filling, or trying to fill, an immense frame. To us, the presence of our characters is not limited to their appearance in one book. The man you meet in one book may be a king in a second volume, and exiled or shot in a third.

Balzac did a great and noble work with a hundred aspects, and he called it the "Comédie Humaine." Our work, begun at the same time as his--although, be it understood, we do not praise it--may fitly be called "The Drama of France."

Now, let us return to Murat, and tell how this love, which had so glorious and, possibly, so fatal an influence on his destiny, came to him.

In 1796, Murat was sent to Paris, charged with the duty of presenting to the Directory the flags and banners taken by the French army at the battles of Dego and Mondovi. During this voyage he made the acquaintance of Madame Bonaparte and Madame Tallien. At Madame Bonaparte's house he again met Mademoiselle Caroline Bonaparte. We say _again_, for that was not the first time he had met the woman who was to share the crown of Naples with him. They had met in Rome, at her brother's house, and, in spite of the rivalry of a young and handsome Roman prince, she had shown him a marked preference.

The three women combined to obtain for him the rank of general of brigade from the Directory. Murat returned to the Army of Italy, more in love than ever, and, in spite of his new rank, he solicited and obtained the favor of remaining with the general-in-chief as aide-de-camp. Unhappily, the fatal sortie took place soon after, in consequence of which he fell in disgrace with Bonaparte. This disgrace had for awhile all the characteristics of actual

enmity. Bonaparte dismissed him from his service as aide-de-camp, and transferred him to Neille's division, and then to that of Baraguey-d'Hilliers. The result was, that when Bonaparte returned to Paris after the treaty of Tolentino, Murat did not accompany him.

This did not at all suit the female triumvirate, who had taken the young general under its direction. The beautiful intriguers entered into the campaign, and as the expedition to Egypt was then preparing, they induced the minister of war to send Murat with it. He embarked in the same ship as Bonaparte, namely the "Orient," but the latter did not address a single word to him during the voyage. After they reached Alexandria, Murat was at first unable to break the icy barrier opposed to him by the general, who, more to put him at a distance from his own person than to give him an opportunity to distinguish himself, confronted him with Mourad Bey. But, during that campaign, Murat performed such prodigies of valor that he effaced, by such bravery, the memory of that momentary weakness; he charged so intrepidly, so madly at Aboukir, that Bonaparte had not the heart to bear him further malice.

Consequently Murat had returned to France with Bonaparte. He had powerfully co-operated with him on the 18th and especially on the 19th Brumaire. He was, therefore, restored to full favor, and, as a proof of that favor, had received the command of the Consular guard.

He thought this the moment to declare his love, a love already well-known to Josephine, who favored it; for which she had two reasons. In the first place, she was a woman in the most charming acceptation of the word; that is to say, all the gentler passions of women were attractive to her. Joachim loved Caroline, Caroline loved Joachim; that was enough to make her wish to protect their love. In the second place, Bonaparte's brothers detested Josephine; Joseph and Lucien were her bitterest enemies, and she was not sorry to make herself two ardent friends in Caroline and Murat. She therefore encouraged the latter to approach Bonaparte on the subject.

Three days before the ceremony we have just described, Murat had entered Bonaparte's study, and, after endless hesitation and circumlocution, had proffered his request.

It is probable that the love of the young pair was no news to Bonaparte, who, however, received it with stern gravity, and contented himself with replying that he would think it over. The matter, in fact, required thinking over. Bonaparte came of a noble family, Murat was the son of an innkeeper. The alliance at such a moment might have great significance. Was the First Consul, in spite of his noble birth, in spite of the exalted rank to which he had raised himself, not only sufficiently republican, but also sufficiently democratic to mingle his blood with that of the common people.

He did not reflect long; his strong, good sense, and his logical mind, told him that he had every interest in allowing the marriage, and he gave his consent to it the same day.

The double news of this marriage and of the removal to the Tuileries was launched on the public at the same time; the one was to counterpoise the other. The First Consul was about to occupy the palace of the former kings, to sleep in the bed of the Bourbons, as they said at that time, but he gave his sister to the son of an innkeeper!

And now, it may be asked, what dowry did the future Queen of Naples bring to the hero of Aboukir? Thirty thousand francs and a diamond necklace, which the First Consul took from his wife, being too poor to buy one. Josephine, who was very fond of her necklace, pouted a little; but the gift, thus obtained, was a triumphant reply to those who claimed that Bonaparte had made a fortune in Italy; besides, why had she taken the interests of the young couple so to heart? She had insisted on marrying them, and she ought to contribute to the dowry.

The result of this clever combination was that on the day when the Consuls left the Luxembourg for the "palace of the government," escorted by the _son of an innkeeper_, soon to be Bonaparte's brother-in-law, it did not occur to those who saw the procession pass to do otherwise than admire and applaud. And, in truth, what could be more admirable and worthy of applause than those processions, which had at their head such men as Murat, Moreau, Junot, Duroc, Augereau, and Masséna?

A grand review had been ordered to take place that same day in the square of the Carrousel. Madame Bonaparte was to be present--not, to be sure, in the balcony of the clock-tower, that being evidently too royal, but at the window of Lebrun's apartment in the Pavilion of Flora.

Bonaparte started at one o'clock precisely from the Luxembourg, escorted by three thousand picked men, among them the splendid regiment of the Guides, created three years earlier as a bodyguard to Bonaparte during the Italian campaign, in consequence of a great danger he had escaped on one occasion. He was resting in a small château, after the exhaustion attendant upon the passage of the Mincio, and was preparing to take a bath, when a retreating Austrian detachment, losing its way, invaded the château, which had no other guard than the sentries. Bonaparte had barely time to escape in his shirt.

A curious difficulty, which deserves to be recorded, arose on the morning of this removal, which took place the 30th Pluviose, year VIII. The generals, of course, had their horses and the ministers their carriages, but the other functionaries had not yet judged it expedient to go to such an expense. Carriages were therefore lacking. They were supplied from the hackney coach-stands, and slips of paper of the same color as the carriages were pasted over their numbers.

The carriage of the First Consul alone was harnessed with six white horses, but as the three consuls were in the same carriage, Bonaparte and Cambacérès on the front seat, and Lebrun on the back, it was, after all, but two horses apiece. Besides, were not these six white horses given to the commander-in-chief by the Emperor Francis himself, after the treaty of Campo-Formio, a trophy in themselves?

The carriage crossed a part of Paris, following the Rue de Thionville, the Quai Voltaire, and the Pont-Royal. From the archway of the Carrousel to the great portal of the Tuileries the Consular guard lined the way. As Bonaparte passed through the archway, he raised his head and read the inscription it bore. That inscription was as follows:

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AUGUST 10, 1792.

ROYALTY IS ABOLISHED IN FRANCE

AND SHALL NEVER RISE AGAIN.

- An almost imperceptible smile flickered on the First Consul's lips.

At the door of the Tuileries, Bonaparte left the carriage and sprang into the saddle to review the troops. When he appeared on his war-horse the applause burst forth wildly on all sides.

After the review was over, he placed himself in front of the clock-tower, with Murat on his right, Lannes at his left, and the glorious staff of the Army of Italy behind him. Then began the march past.

And now it was that one of those inspirations came to him which engrave themselves forever on the hearts of soldiers. As the flags of the 30th, the 96th, and the 33d demi-brigades were borne past him, and he saw that, of those banners, there remained but a stick and a few rags, riddled with balls and blackened with powder, he took his hat from his head and bowed.

Then, when the march was over, he dismounted from his horse, and, with a firm step, he walked up the grand stairway of the Valois and the Bourbons.

That night, when he was alone with Bourrienne, the latter asked: "Well, general, are you satisfied?"

"Yes," replied Bonaparte, dreamily, "everything went off nicely, didn't it?"

"Wonderfully well."

"I saw you standing near Madame Bonaparte at the ground-floor window of the Pavilion of Flora."

"I saw you, too, general; you were reading the inscription on the arch of the Carrousel."

"Yes," said Bonaparte, "'August 10,1792. Royalty is abolished in France, and shall never rise again.'"

"Shall I have it removed?" asked Bourrienne.

"Useless," replied the First Consul, "it will fall of itself." Then, with a sigh, he added: "Bourrienne, do you know whom I missed to-day?"

"No, general."

"Roland. What the devil is he doing that he doesn't give me any news of himself?"

We are about to see what Roland was doing.