MADAME DE RÉMUSAT

MEMOIRS OF THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE BONAPARTE

Madame de Rémusat

Memoirs of the Empress Josephine Bonaparte

Published by
MUSAICUM
Books

- Advanced Digital Solutions & High-Quality eBook Formatting -

musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066382711

Table of Contents

Volume 1

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Table of Contents

I

Table of Contents

MY father bequeathed to me the manuscript of the memoirs of my grandmother, who was lady-in-waiting to the Empress Josephine, accompanied by an injunction that I should publish them. He regarded those memoirs as extremely important to the history of the first portion of the present century, and had frequently contemplated publishing them himself; but he was always hindered from doing so, either by his other duties, by his many labors, or by certain scruples. He deferred the moment at which the public was to be made acquainted with these valuable reminiscences of an epoch—recent, indeed, but respecting which the present generation is so ill informed—precisely because that epoch was recent, and many persons who had been involved in its important events were still living. Although the author of these memoirs can not be accused of intentional malice, she passes judgment upon persons and things very freely. A certain consideration, which is not always consonant with the verity of history, is due, not only to the living, but to the children of the dead; the years passed on, however, and the reasons for silence diminished with the lapse of time.

About 1848 my father would perhaps have allowed this manuscript to see the light; but the empire and the Emperor returned, and then the book might have been regarded either as a piece of flattery tendered to the son of Queen Hortense, who is very gently handled by the writer, or as a direct insult, on other points, to the dynasty. Circumstances had thus given a polemic character—an aspect of actuality, as the phrase goes—to a work which should be regarded as a candid and impartial history, the narrative of a remarkable woman, who relates with simple sincerity that which she witnessed at the court and during the reign of the Emperor, and who records her estimate of him as an individual. In any case, it is probable that the book would have been prosecuted, and its publication interdicted. I may add, lest any should consider these reasons insufficient, that my father, who was always willing that his politics, his opinions, and his personal conduct should be discussed by the critics and the press, who lived in the full glare of publicity, yet shrank with great reluctance from placing names which were dear to him before the public. That they should incur the slightest censure, that they should be uttered with any severity of tone, he dreaded extremely. He was timid when either his mother or his son was in question. His love for his mother had been the “grand passion” of his life. To her he ascribed all the happiness of his youth, every merit which he possessed, and all the success of every kind that had come to him throughout his whole existence. He derived from her his qualities alike of heart and mind; he was bound to her by the tie of close similarity of ideas, as well as by that of filial affection. Her memory, her letters, her thoughts

occupied a place in his life which few suspected, for he seldom spoke of her, precisely because he was always thinking of her, and he would have feared imperfect sympathy from others in his admiration of her who was incomparable in his eyes. Who among us does not know what it is to be united by a passionate, almost fierce affection to one who is no more; ceaselessly to think of that beloved one, to question, to dream, to be always under the impression of the vanished presence—of the silent counsels; to feel that the life gone from us is mixed up with our own life, every day, not only on great occasions, and in all our actions, whether public or private; and yet, that we can not bear to speak to others of the ever-present occupant of our thoughts—no, not even to our dearest friends—and can not even hear the dear name uttered without secret pain and disquiet? Rarely, indeed, can even the sweetness of praise lavished upon that name by a friend or a stranger avail to soothe our deep, mysterious trouble, or render it endurable.

While, however, a proper and natural sentiment dictates that memoirs should not appear until a considerable time has elapsed, it is equally desirable that their publication should not be delayed until all trace of the facts related, of the impressions made, or of the eye-witnesses of events has passed away. In order that the accuracy, or at least the sincerity of memoirs may not be disputed, each family should be in a position to substantiate them by its own recollections; and it is well that the generation which reads them should follow that which they depict. The records they contain are all the more useful because the times which they chronicle have not yet become altogether historic. This

is our case at the present moment, and the great name of Napoleon is still a party battle-cry. It is interesting to introduce a new element into the strife which rages around that majestic shade. Although the epoch of the First Empire has been much discussed by the writers of memoirs, the inner life of the imperial palace has never been handled freely, and in detail; and for this good reasons have existed. The functionaries or the frequenters of the court of Napoleon I. did not care to reveal with entire unreserve the story of the time they had passed in his service. The majority, having joined the Legitimist ranks after the Restoration, were humiliated by the remembrance that they had served the usurper, especially in offices which are generally held to be ennobled only by the hereditary greatness of him who confers them; and their descendants would have been disconcerted had such manuscripts been left to them, by their authors, with the obligation of giving them to the world. It would, perhaps, be difficult to find another editor, also a grandson, who could publish such a work so willingly as I. The talent of the writer and the utility of her book affect me much more than the difference between the opinions of my grandmother and those of her descendants. My father’s life, his renown, the political creed which is his most precious bequest to me, absolve me from any necessity for explaining how and why it is that I do not necessarily adopt all the views of the author of these Memoirs. On the contrary, it would be easy to find in this book the first traces of that liberal spirit which animated my grandparents in the first days of the Revolution, which was transmitted to and happily developed in their son. It was

almost being liberal already not to regard the principles of political liberty with hatred at the end of the last century, when so many people were ready to lay crimes which tarnished the Revolution to the charge of that liberty, and to pass judgment, notwithstanding the true admiration and the deep gratitude with which they regarded the Emperor, on the defects of his character and the evils of despotism.

Such valuable impartiality was rare indeed among the contemporaries of the great Emperor, nor have we met with it in our own time among the servants of a sovereign far less likely to dazzle those who approached him. Such a sentiment is, however, easy at the present day. Events have brought France into a state in which she is ready to receive everything with equanimity, to judge every one with equity. We have observed many changes of opinion concerning the early years of the present century. One need not have reached a very advanced stage of life to recall a time when the legend of the Empire was accepted even by the enemies of the Empire; when it might be admired with impunity; when children believed in an Emperor, who was at once a grand personage and a good fellow, somewhat like the notion of God entertained by Béranger, who indeed turned both God and Napoleon into heroes for his odes. The most determined adversaries of despotism, those who were themselves destined to undergo persecution by a new Empire, brought back to France the mortal remains of Napoleon the Great—his “ashes,” as, lending an antique coloring to a modern ceremony, it was the fashion to say just then. At a later date, experience of the Second Empire opened the eyes, even of those who do not admit passion

into politics, to the truth respecting the first. The disasters brought upon France in 1870, by Napoleon III., have reminded us that it was the other Emperor who commenced that fatal work; and an almost general malediction rises to the lips of the nation at that name—Bonaparte—which was once uttered with respectful enthusiasm. So fluctuating is the justice of nations! It is, however, allowable to say that the justice of France to-day comes nearer to true justice than at the time when, swayed by the longing for rest and the dread of liberty, she surrendered herself to the passion for military glory. Between these two extremes how many modes of opinion have arisen, and gone through their several phases of triumph and decline! It will be evident to all readers, I hope, that the author of the following Memoirs, who came to the Court in her youth, regarded those problems which were then and still are in debate, although General Bonaparte thought he had solved them, with an entire absence of prejudice. Her opinions were formed by degrees, like the opinions of France itself, which was also very young in those days. She was at first dazzled and aroused to enthusiasm by the great genius of the age, but she afterward recovered the balance of her judgment by the aid of events and of contact with other minds. More than one of our contemporaries may find in these Memoirs an explanation of the conduct or the state of mind of some persons of their kin whose Bonapartism or Liberalism at different epochs has hitherto appeared inexplicable to them. And also—not their least merit in my eyes—these Memoirs will reveal to the reader the first germs of a remarkable

talent, which was developed in the writer’s son to a supreme degree.

A brief summary of the life of my grandmother, or at least of the period which preceded her arrival at Court, is indispensable to the reader’s comprehension of the impressions and the remembrances which she brought thither. My father had frequently projected a complete biography of his parents, and had, indeed, sketched out some portions of the work. He did not leave any of it in a finished condition; but a great number of notes and fragments written by his own hand, concerning the members of his family, his own youthful opinions, and persons whom he had known, render it easy to narrate the incidents of my grandmother’s early years, the feelings with which she entered upon her life at Court, and the circumstances that led her to write her Memoirs. It is also in my power to add some comments upon her by her son, which will lead the reader to know and esteem her. It was my father’s strong desire that her readers should be inspired with kindly sentiments toward the object of his own devotion, love and admiration; and I believe that the perusal of her reminiscences, and especially of her correspondence, which is also to be given to the public in due time, can not fail to secure the realization of his wish.

II

Table of Contents

Claire Elisabeth Jeanne Gravier de Vergennes was born on the 5th of January, 1780. Her father was Charles Gravier de Vergennes, Counselor to the Parliament of Burgundy, Master of Requests, afterward Intendant of Auch, and finally Director of the Vingtièmes.[1] My great-grandfather was not, therefore, as it has been frequently but erroneously stated, the minister who was so well known as the Comte de Vergennes. That minister had an elder brother who was called “the Marquis,” the first of the family, I believe, who bore such a title. This marquis had quitted the magistracy to enter upon a diplomatic career. He was acting as minister in Switzerland in 1777, when the French treaties with the Helvetian Republic were renewed. Afterward he was given the title of ambassador. His son, Charles Gravier de Vergennes, who was born at Dijon in 1751, married Adelaide Françoise de Bastard, born about 1760. This lady’s family came originally from Gascony, and a branch of it, whose members distinguished themselves at the bar and in the magistracy, was settled at Toulouse. Her father, Dominique de Bastard, born at Laffitte (Haute-Garonne), had been one of the counselors to the parliament, and was the senior counselor at the time of his death. His bust is in the Salle des Illustres in the Capitol. He took an active part in the measures of Chancellor Maupeou. His daughter’s husband, M. de Vergennes, being a member of the legal profession, bore, as was the custom under the old régime, no title. It is

said that he was a man of only ordinary ability, who took his pleasure in life without much discrimination, but also that he had good sense and was a useful official. He belonged to that administrative school of which MM. de Trudaine were the leaders.

Madame de Vergennes, of whom my father constantly spoke, was a person of more individuality of character; she was both clever and good. When he was quite a child, my father was on most confidential terms with her, as grandsons frequently are with their grandmothers. In his bright and kindly nature, his pleasant raillery, which was never malicious, he resembled her; and from her he also inherited his musical gifts, a good voice for singing, and a quick memory for the airs and couplets of the vaudevilles of the day. He never lost his habit of humming the popular songs of the old régime. Madame de Vergennes had the ideas of her time—a touch of philosophy, stopping short of incredulity, and a certain repugnance to the Court, although she regarded Louis XVI. with affection and respect. Her intellect, which was bright, practical, and independent, was highly cultivated; her conversation was brilliant and sometimes very free, after the manner of the period. Nevertheless, she gave her two daughters, Claire and Alix, a strict and indeed rather solitary education, for it was the fashion of that day that parents should see but little of their children. The two sisters studied in a large, fireless room, apart from the rest of the house, under the inspection of a governess, and were instructed in what may be called the frivolous arts—music, drawing, and dancing. They were seldom taken to see a play, but they were occasionally

indulged with a visit to the opera, and now and then with a ball.

M. de Vergennes had not desired or foreseen the Revolution; but he was neither displeased nor alarmed by it. He and his friends belonged to that citizen class, ennobled by holding public offices, which seemed to be the nation itself, and he can not have found himself much out of his place among those who were called “the electors of ’89.” He was elected a member of the Council of the Commune, and made a major in the National Guard. M. de Lafayette, whose granddaughter was to become the wife of M. de Vergennes’s grandson, forty years after, and M. Royer-Collard, whom that grandson was to succeed at the French Academy, treated him like one of themselves. His opinions were more in accordance with those of M. Royer-Collard than with those of M. de Lafayette, and the French Revolution soon shot far ahead of him. He did not, however, feel any inclination to emigrate. His patriotism, as well as his attachment to Louis XVI., led him to remain in France; and thus he was unable to elude that fate which, in 1793, threatened all who were in positions similar to his and of the same way of thinking. He was falsely accused of intending to emigrate, by the Administration of the Département of Saône et Loire; his property was placed under sequestration; and he was arrested in Paris, at the house in the Rue Saint Eustache which he had inhabited since 1788. The man who arrested him had no warrant from the Committee of Public Safety except for the arrest of M. de Vergennes’s father. He took the son because he lived with the father, and both died on

the same scaffold on the 6th Thermidor (24th July, 1794), three days before the fall of Robespierre.

M. de Vergennes's death left his unhappy wife and daughters unprotected, and in straitened circumstances, as he had sold his estate in Burgundy a short time previously, and its price had been confiscated by the nation. There remained to them, however, one friend, not powerful, indeed, but full of zeal and good will. This was a young man with whom M. de Vergennes had become acquainted in the early days of the Revolution, whose family had formerly been of some importance in the commercial world, and also in the civic administration of Marseilles, so that the younger members were taking their places in the magistracy and in the army, in short, among "the privileged," as the phrase then went. This young man, Augustin Laurent de Rémusat, was born at Valensoles, in Provence, on the 28th of August, 1762. After having studied, with great credit, at Juilly, the former seat of that Oratorian College which still exists near Paris, he was nominated, at twenty years of age, advocate-general to the Cour des Aides and the Chambre des Comptes Réunies of Provence. My father has sketched the portrait of that young man, his arrival in Paris, and his life in the midst of the new society. The following note tells, better than I could, how M. de Rémusat loved and married Mademoiselle Claire de Vergennes:

> "The society of Aix, a city in which nobles dwelt and a parliament assembled, was of the brilliant order. My father lived a great deal in society. He was of an agreeable presence, had a great deal of pleasant

humor, fine and polished manners, high spirits, and a reputation for gallantry. He sought and obtained all the social success that a young man could desire. Nevertheless, he attended sedulously to his profession, which he liked, and he married, in 1783, Mademoiselle de Sannes, the daughter of the Procureur-Général of his Compagnie. This marriage was dissolved by the death of Madame de Rémusat, who died shortly after the birth of a daughter.

“The Revolution broke out; the supreme courts were suppressed; and the settling of their business was a serious and important affair. In order to carry it through, the Cour des Aides sent a deputation to Paris. My father was one of the delegates. He has often told me that he then had occasion to see M. de Mirabeau, deputy for Aix, on the business of his mission; and, notwithstanding his prejudices as an adherent of the old parliaments, he was charmed with Mirabeau’s pompous politeness. My father never told me details of his manner of living, so that I do not know what were the circumstances under which he went to the house of my grandfather Vergennes. He passed through the terrible years of the Revolution alone and unknown in Paris, and without any personal mishaps. Society no longer existed. His company was therefore all the more agreeable, and even the more useful to my grandmother (Madame de Vergennes), who was involved in great anxieties and misfortunes. My father used to tell me that my grandfather was a commonplace sort of man, but he soon learned to

appreciate my grandmother very highly, and she conceived a liking for him. She was a wise, moderate-minded woman, who entertained no fancies, cherished no prejudices, and gave way to no impulses. She distrusted everything in which there was any exaggeration, and detested affectation of every kind, but she was readily touched by solid worth and by genuine feeling; while her clear-headedness and her practical, somewhat sarcastic turn of mind preserved her from everything that lacked prudence or morality. Her head was never betrayed by her heart; but, as she had suffered from the neglect of a husband to whom she was superior, she was disposed to make inclination and choice the ruling motives of marriage.

“Immediately after the death of my grandfather, a decree was issued, by which all nobles were ordered to quit Paris. Madame de Vergennes retired to Saint Gratien, in the valley of Montmorency, with her two daughters, Claire and Alix; and she gave my father permission to follow her thither. His presence was precious to them. His bright and cheerful nature, his amiability, and careful attentions to those he loved, made him a charming companion. His taste for a quiet life, the country, and seclusion, and his cultivated mind, exactly fitted him for a family circle composed of intelligent persons, and in which education was always going on. I can not believe that my grandmother did not early foresee and acquiesce in that which was destined to happen, even supposing

there was not at that time anything to read in the heart of her daughter. It is certain, for my mother says so in several of her letters, that, although she was then only a child, her prematurely serious turn of mind, her sensitive and emotional nature, her vivid imagination, and finally, the combined influences of intimacy, solitude, and misfortune, all united to inspire her with an interest in my father, which had from the first all the characteristics of a lofty and abiding sentiment, I do not think I have ever met a woman in whom so much moral strictness was combined with so much romantic sensibility as in my mother. Her youth, her extreme youth, was, as it were, steadied by those fortunate circumstances which bound her to duty by ties of passion, and procured for her that rare combination, peace of soul and the delightful agitation of the heart.

“She was not tall, but her figure was elegant and well proportioned. She was fair and plump; indeed, it used to be feared that she would grow too fat. Her eyes were fine and expressive, black, like her hair; her features were regular, but rather too large. Her countenance was grave, almost imposing; but the intelligent kindliness of her glance tempered the gravity of her features very pleasantly. Her strong, well-trained, fertile intellect, had certain virile qualities, with which the extreme vividness of her imagination frequently clashed. She possessed sound judgment and keen powers of observation, and she was entirely unaffected in her manners and in her

> modes of expression, although she was not without a certain subtlety of ideas. In reality, she was profoundly reasonable, but she was headstrong; her intellect was more reasonable than herself. In her youth she lacked gayety and probably ease, may have appeared to be pedantic because she was serious, affected because she was silent, absent-minded, and indifferent to almost all the small things of every-day life. But, with her mother, whose cheerful moods she sometimes crossed, with her husband, whose simple tastes and easy temper she never crossed, she was not wanting in richness and freedom. She had even a kind of gayety of her own, which developed as she grew older, when, having been very absent and absorbed in her own thoughts while she was very young, she became more like her mother. I have often thought that, if she had lived long enough to share the house in which I am writing to-day, she would have been the merriest of us all."

My father wrote these lines in 1857, at Laffitte (Haute-Garonne), where all those whom he loved were assembled, and we were gay and happy. In quoting them I am somewhat outrunning my narrative, for he speaks here of his mother as of a woman and not as of a young girl, and Claire de Vergennes, when she married, early in the year 1796, was hardly sixteen years old.

M. and Mme. de Rémusat—for thus I shall designate them henceforth, for the sake of clearness in my story—lived sometimes in Paris, and sometimes in a modest country house at Saint Gratien, a residence which had two

strong recommendations—the beauty of the landscape and the attraction of the neighborhood.

Nearest and pleasantest of neighbors were the owners of Sannois, with whom Madame de Vergennes was very intimate. Jean Jacques Rousseau's "Confessions," Madame d'Epinay's "Mémoires," and a hundred works of the last century as well, have made the place and the persons known to the world. Madame d'Houdetot (Sophie de Lalive) had lived peacefully, in her old age, throughout the troublous time of the Revolution in that country house, in the society of her husband and of M. de Saint Lambert. Between the famous trio and the young couple at Saint Gratien so close an intimacy was formed that, when the house at Saint Gratien was sold, my grandparents hired one within a shorter distance of the residence of their friends, and a way of communication was made between the gardens of their respective abodes. By degrees, however, M. de Rémusat got into the habit of going to Paris more and more frequently; and, as the times became quieter, he began to think of emerging from obscurity, and from the narrow circumstances to which he was reduced by the confiscation of the property of his wife's father and the loss of his own place in the magistracy. As is always the case in France, it was of employment in some public function that he thought. He had no relations with the Government, or even with M. de Talleyrand, who was then Foreign Minister, but he directed his efforts toward that department, and obtained, if not exactly a place, at least an occupation, which was likely to lead to a place, in the office of the solicitors to the Ministry.

Besides the agreeable and intellectual relations which they maintained with Sannois, M. and Mme. de Rémusat had formed an intimacy no less close, but which was destined to exercise a much greater influence over their fortunes, with Madame de Beauharnais, who, in 1796, became the wife of Bonaparte. When her friend had acquired power through her all-powerful husband, Madame de Vergennes applied to her on behalf of her son-in-law, who wished to enter the Council of State or the Administration. The First Consul, however, or his wife, had a different idea of what ought to be done. The consideration and respect in which Madame de Vergennes was held, her social station, her name—which was allied both to the old régime and to the new ideas—gave a certain value to the relations of her family with the consular palace, which at that time had but little intercourse with Parisian society. Quite unexpectedly, M. de Rémusat was appointed Prefect of the Palace, in 1802; and shortly afterward Madame de Rémusat became Lady-in-Waiting (Dame pour Accompagner) to Madame Bonaparte, a title which was soon changed into the better sounding one of Lady of the Palace (Dame du Palais).

III

Table of Contents

Persons of the way of thinking of M. and Mme. de Rémusat had no sacrifice to make in casting in their lot with the new régime. They had neither the extravagant sentiments of the Royalists, nor the austerity of the Republicans. No doubt their attitude of mind approached more nearly to that of the Royalists than to that of the Republicans, but their royalism reduced itself to pious veneration for Louis XVI. The misfortunes of that unhappy prince rendered his memory sacred, and his person had always been regarded in the family of M. de Vergennes with peculiar respect; but “Legitimacy” had not yet been invented, and those persons who most deeply deplored the fall of the old régime, or rather that of the ancient dynasty, did not hold themselves under any obligation to believe that everything done in France in the absence of the Bourbons was null and void. Pure and unalloyed admiration was inspired by the young general who was reëstablishing material, if not moral order, with such brilliant success, in a society which was disturbed after a fashion very different from that of those successive later times, in which so many worthless “saviours” have turned up.

Public functionaries in those days adhered to the opinion which was very natural under the old régime, that an official is responsible only for what he does, and not for either the acts or the origin of the Government. The sense of “solidarity” does not exist in absolute monarchies. The

parliamentary régime has happily rendered us more sensitive, and all honest people now admit the collective responsibility of all the agents of a power. One could not nowadays serve a government whose tendency and general policy one did not approve; but it was otherwise in former times. My father—who had more right than any one else to be strict in these matters, and who, perhaps, owed somewhat of his extreme political scrupulousness to the difficult position in which he had seen his parents placed during his own childhood, between their private impressions and their official duties—explains these shades of difference in an unpublished letter to M. Sainte Beuve, to whom he had communicated certain biographical details for an article in the “Revue des Deux Mondes.”

> “It was not a pis aller, from necessity, weakness, or as a temporary expedient, that my parents attached themselves to the new régime. Of their free will and with entire confidence they united themselves with its fortunes. If you add to that all the pleasures of an easy and prominent position to be stepped into from one of poverty and obscurity, the curiosity which a court of so novel a kind inspired, the incomparable interest of the spectacle of a man like the Emperor at an epoch when he was irreproachable, young, and still amiable, you can easily conceive the attraction which induced my parents to overlook all that was in reality opposed to their tastes, their reason, and even their true interests in this new position. At the end of two or three years, they had learned too well that a court is

always a court, and that all is not pleasure in the personal service of an absolute master, even though he may charm and dazzle. But this did not prevent their being for a long time well enough satisfied with their lot. My mother especially was much amused with all that passed before her eyes, and she was on very good terms with the Empress, who was extremely kind and generous, while she enthusiastically admired the Emperor. He treated my mother with flattering distinction. She was almost the only woman with whom he ever talked. My mother would sometimes say, after the Empire had ceased to exist:

‘Va, je t’ai trop aimé pour ne pas te haïr!’”

Of the impressions made by the new Court upon the new Lady of the Palace we have no record. The security of the Post-office was very doubtful. Madame de Vergennes burned all her daughter’s letters, and the correspondence of the latter with her husband does not commence until some years later, during the Emperor’s journeys in Italy and Germany. Nevertheless, we can perceive from her Memoirs, although they do not abound in personal details, how strange and novel everything seemed to so very young a woman, transplanted all of a sudden into this palace, and an eye-witness of the private life of the glorious chief of an unknown government. She was very serious, as, when they are not very frivolous the young are apt to be, and much disposed to observation and reflection. She seems to have had no taste for display, no great solicitude about external things, no turn for gossip or the running down of other

people, no love of talking or display. What was thought of her at that time? We can not tell. We only know, from certain passages in sundry letters and memoirs, that she was considered clever, and that people were a little afraid of her. Probably, however, her companions thought her pedantic rather than dangerous. She had a considerable “success,” especially at first; for in its early days the Court was not numerous—there were few distinctions or favors to be schemed for, rivalry was not very brisk or ardent. Little by little, however, this little society became a real court. Now, courtiers are always afraid of intellect, and especially of that disposition, unintelligible to them, which clever people have to interest themselves in a disinterested manner, so to speak, in knowing things and judging characters, without even thinking of turning their knowledge to their own advantage. Courtiers always suspect that every opinion has a hidden aim. Persons of quick intellect are very strongly impressed by the spectacle of human affairs, even when they are merely looking on at them. And that faculty is the most incomprehensible to those who do not possess it, and who attribute its effects to some personal motive, or interested calculation. They suspect intrigue or resentment every time that they observe a movement in any direction, but they have no idea of the spontaneous and gratuitous action of the mind. Every one has been exposed to mistrust of this kind, which is more to be dreaded when a woman, endowed with excessive activity of imagination, and drawn on by her intelligence to form opinions on matters out of her sphere, is in question. Many persons, especially in that somewhat coarse society, would detect egotism and

pretension in her life and conversation, and accuse her unduly of ambition.

That her husband was entirely devoid of ambition, and free from any disposition to intrigue, was evident to all. The position in which the favor of the First Consul had placed him did not suit him; he would, no doubt, have preferred some laborious administrative function to one which demanded nothing of him but suavity and a graceful demeanor. From the “Memoirs,” from his own letters, and from my father’s account of him, we gather that M. de Rémusat was a man of discreet conduct, with keen wits, and a cheerful and even temper—not at all a person calculated to make enemies. Indeed, he would never have had any, but for a certain shyness, which, little as it seems to harmonize with conversational powers and an agreeable manner, is, nevertheless, occasionally allied with them. His taste for quiet life, and some indolence and timidity of character, had impelled him more and more toward retirement and isolation. Modesty and self-esteem mingled in his nature; and, without rendering him insensible to the honors of the post which he had obtained, they sometimes made him ashamed of the solemn trifles to which that very post forced him to devote his life. He believed himself to be made for better things, but he did not care for toiling in search of that which did not come to him of itself. He took but little pleasure in expressing the art, in which he was probably not deficient, of managing men. He did not love to put himself forward, and his indolent temperament induced him to let things take their chance. He afterward became a hard-working prefect, but he was a negligent and inactive

courtier. He employed his skill simply to avoid disputes, and he discharged his official functions with quiet good taste. After having had many friends, and entered into numerous relations, he let them drop through, or at least he never seemed to do anything to retain them. Unless great care be taken, ties are loosened, recollections are effaced, rivalries are formed, and all the chances of ambition escape one's grasp. M. de Rémusat had no skill in playing a part, forming connections, bringing people together, or contriving the opportunities of fortune or success. He seems never to have regretted this. It would be easy for me to trace his motives —to depict his character in detail, and to narrate his errors, his grievances, and even his sufferings; for was he not my grandfather?

The first severe trial which M. and Mme. de Rémusat had to endure in their new position was the murder of the Duc d'Enghien. How profound was the grief which they felt when the man whom they ardently admired, as the express image of power and genius, and whom they strove to love, stained his hands with innocent blood, and they were forced to recognize that such a deed was simply the result of a cold and inhuman calculation, the following narrative will prove. It will, indeed, be seen that the impression made by the crime upon all honest persons at the Court was even deeper than that which it produced outside among the general public, who had become almost indifferent, through custom, to deeds of this kind. Even among the Royalists, who were absolutely inimical to the Government, the event caused more sorrow than indignation, so perverted had the public mind become in political matters and respecting State

expedients! Where could the men of that day have acquired principles? Was it the old régime or the Terror which could have instructed them? A short time afterward, the Sovereign Pontiff came to Paris, and, among the reasons which made him hesitate to crown the new Charlemagne, it is very doubtful whether this one was ever even weighed for a moment. The press was dumb, and men must be possessed of information before they are aroused to anger. Let us hope that civilization has now made so much progress that a repetition of similar incidents would be impossible. We should, however, be restrained from optimism on this point by the remembrance of what we have witnessed in our own time.

The following Memoirs are an exact record of the life of the author, and the history of the early years of the present century. They show us what changes the establishment of the Empire effected at the Court, and how life there and its relations became more difficult and embarrassing; how by degrees the prestige of the Emperor declined, in proportion as he misused his great gifts, his power, and his chances. Mistakes, reverses, and failures were multiplied; and at the same time the adhesion of the earliest admirers of the Emperor became less fervent, and the manner of serving reflected the mode of thinking. Two parties, the Beauharnais and the Bonapartes, disputed the favor of the sovereign master with each other; and M. and Mme. de Rémusat were regarded as belonging to the former, by reason of their natural feelings and their family relations. Their position was consequently affected in no small degree by the downfall and departure of the Empress Josephine. Everything was,

however, much changed, and, when her lady-in-waiting followed her into her retirement, the Emperor seems to have made but little effort to detain Mme. de Rémusat. Perhaps he was glad that a person of good sense and quick intelligence should watch over his forsaken and somewhat imprudent wife; but it must also be taken into account that my grandmother's delicate health, her love of quiet, and her distaste for all festivities, had isolated her almost entirely from court life.

Her husband, wearied and disgusted, gave way every day more and more to his discontent, and to his inability to lay himself out to please the great personages who were either cold or hostile to him. He neglected his functions as Chamberlain in order to concentrate himself on his duties as "Administrator of Theatres," but the latter he fulfilled admirably. A great part of the actual organization of the Théâtre Français is due to him. My father, born in 1797, and very young when his father was Chamberlain to the Emperor, was remarkable as a child for his intelligence and his observation, and he retained a very distinct recollection of that period of discouragement and ennui. He has told me that he frequently knew his father to return from Saint Cloud utterly worn out, and tried beyond his patience by the burden which the arbitrariness and the ill temper of the Emperor laid upon all who approached him. That the child was an eye- and ear-witness of his complaints at those moments in which restraints are cast off is evident, for, when he was more master of himself, he was fain to represent himself as satisfied with his master and his position, and he endeavored to conceal his vexations from