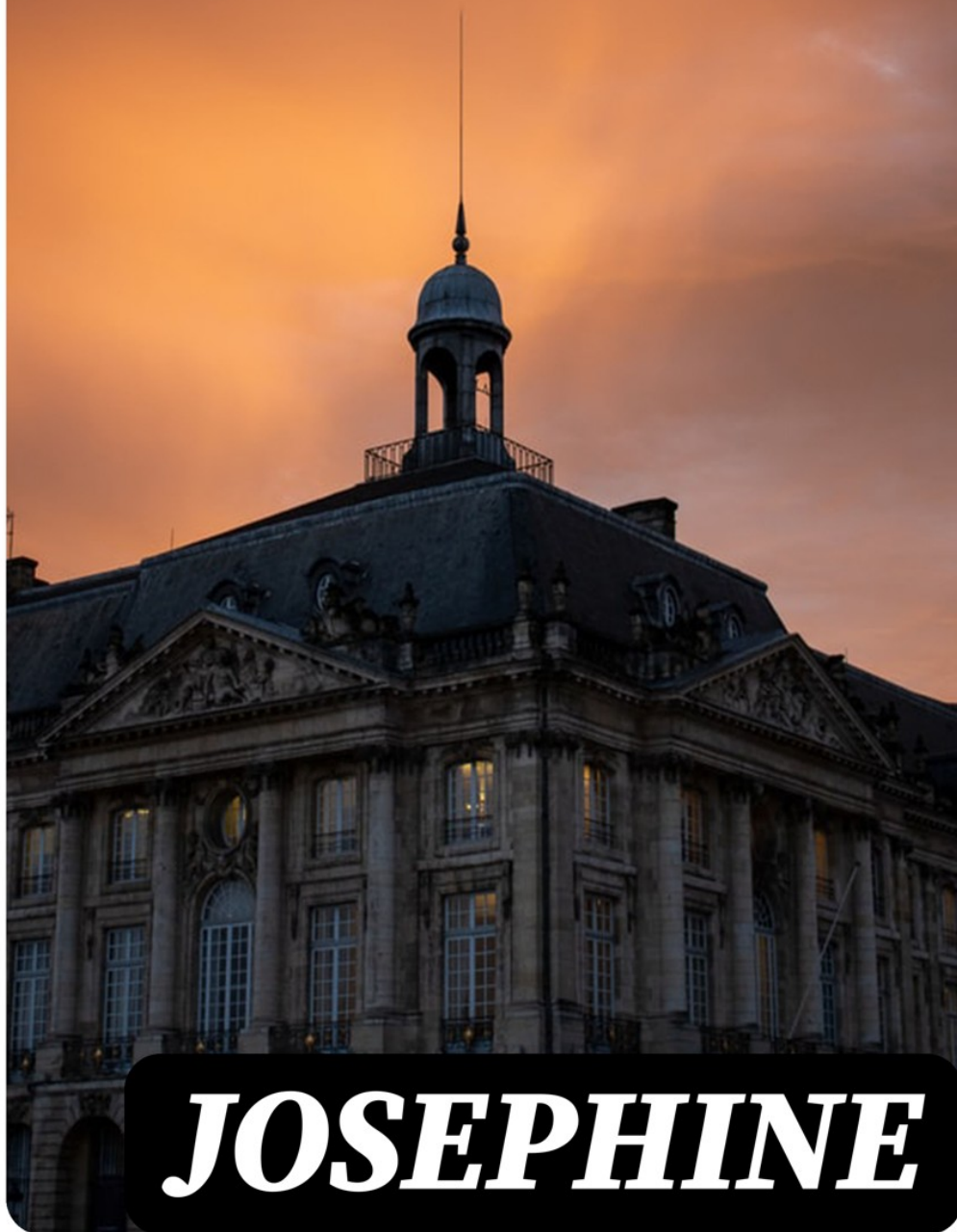


***JOHN  
S. C. ABBOTT***



***JOSEPHINE***

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***JOSEPHINE***

**John S. C. Abbott**

# **Josephine**

**Makers of History**

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JOSEPHINE.

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## **PREFACE.**

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Maria Antoinette, Madame Roland, and Josephine are the three most prominent heroines of the French Revolution. The history of their lives necessarily records all the most interesting events of that most fearful tragedy which man has ever enacted. Maria Antoinette beheld the morning dawn of the Revolution; its lurid mid-day sun glared upon Madame Roland; and Josephine beheld the portentous

phenomenon fade away. Each of these heroines displayed traits of character worthy of all imitation. No one can read the history of their lives without being ennobled by the contemplation of the fortitude and grandeur of spirit they evinced. To the young ladies of our land we especially commend the Heroines of the French Revolution.

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## JOSEPHINE.

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# CHAPTER I.

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## LIFE IN MARTINIQUE.

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A.D. 1760-A.D. 1775

The island of Martinique emerges in *Martinique*. tropical luxuriance from the bosom of the *Its varied* Caribbean Sea. A meridian sun causes the *beauties*. whole land to smile in perennial verdure, and all the gorgeous flowers and luscious fruits of the torrid zone adorn upland and prairie in boundless profusion. Mountains, densely wooded, rear their summits sublimely to the skies, and valleys charm the eye with pictures more beautiful than imagination can create. Ocean breezes ever sweep these hills and vales, and temper the heat of a vertical sun. Slaves, whose dusky limbs are scarcely veiled by the lightest clothing, till the soil, while the white inhabitants, supported by the indolent labor of these unpaid menials, loiter away life in listless leisure and in rustic luxury. Far removed from the dissipating influences of European and American opulence, they dwell in their secluded island in a state of almost patriarchal simplicity.

About the year 1760, a young French *Birth of* officer, Captain Joseph Gaspard Tascher, *Josephine*. accompanied his regiment of horse to this *Her parents'* island. While here on professional duty, he *death*. became attached to a young lady from France, whose



parents, formerly opulent, in consequence of the loss of property, had moved to the West Indies to retrieve their fortunes. But little is known respecting Mademoiselle de Sanois, this young lady, who was soon married to M. Tascher. Josephine was the only child born of this union. In consequence of the early death of her mother, she was, while an infant, intrusted to the care of her aunt. Her father soon after died, and the little orphan appears never to have known a father's or a mother's love.

Madame Renaudin, the kind aunt, who *M. Renaudin*. now, with maternal affection, took charge of the helpless infant, was a lady of wealth, and of great benevolence of character. Her husband was the owner of several estates, and lived surrounded by all that plain and rustic profusion which characterizes the abode of the wealthy planter. His large possessions, and his energy of character, gave him a wide influence over the island. He was remarkable for his humane treatment of his slaves, and for the successful manner with which he conducted the affairs of his plantations.

The general condition of the slaves of *His kind* Martinique at this time was very *treatment of* deplorable; but on the plantations of M. *his slaves*. Renaudin there was as perfect a state of *Gratitude of the* contentment and of happiness as is *slaves*. consistent with the deplorable institution of slavery. The slaves, many of them but recently torn from their homes in Africa, were necessarily ignorant, degraded, and superstitious. They knew nothing of those more elevated and refined enjoyments which the cultivated mind so highly

appreciates, but which are so often also connected with the most exquisite suffering. Josephine, in subsequent life, gave a very vivid description of the wretchedness of the slaves in general, and also of the peace and harmony which, in striking contrast, cheered the estates of her uncle. When the days' tasks were done, the negroes, constitutionally light-hearted and merry, gathered around their cabins with songs and dances, often prolonged late into the hours of the night. They had never known any thing better than their present lot. They compared their condition with that of the slaves on the adjoining plantations, and exulted in view of their own enjoyments. M. and Madame Renaudin often visited their cabins, spoke words of kindness to them in their hours of sickness and sorrow, encouraged the formation of pure attachments and honorable marriage among the young, and took a lively interest in their sports. The slaves loved their kind master and mistress most sincerely, and manifested their affection in a thousand simple ways which touched the heart.

Josephine imbibed from infancy the *Josephine a* spirit of her uncle and aunt. She always *universal* spoke to the slaves in tones of kindness, *favorite*. and became a universal favorite with all upon the plantations. She had no playmates but the little negroes and she united with them freely in all their sports. Still, these little ebon children of bondage evidently looked up to Josephine as to a superior being. She was the queen around whom they circled in affectionate homage. The instinctive faculty, which Josephine displayed through life, of winning the most ardent love of all who met her, while, at

the same time, she was protected from any undue familiarity, she seems to have possessed even at that early day. The children, who were her companions in all the sports of childhood, were also dutiful subjects ever ready to be obedient to her will.

The social position of M. Renaudin, as *Hospitality of* one of the most opulent and influential *M. Renaudin.* gentlemen of Martinique, necessarily *Society at his* attracted to his hospitable residence much *house.*

refined and cultivated society. Strangers from Europe visiting the island, planters of intellectual tastes, and ladies of polished manners, met a cordial welcome beneath the spacious roof of this abode, where all abundance was to be found. Madame Renaudin had passed her early years in Paris, and her manners were embellished with that elegance and refinement which have given to Parisian society such a world-wide celebrity. There was, at that period, much more intercourse between the mother country and the colonies than at the present day. Thus Josephine, though reared in a provincial home, was accustomed, from infancy, to associate with gentlemen and ladies who were familiar with the etiquette of the highest rank in society, and whose conversation was intellectual and improving.

It at first view seems difficult to account *Early education* for the high degree of mental culture *of Josephine.*

which Josephine displayed, when, seated *Her* by the side of Napoleon, she was the *accomplishmen* Empress of France. Her remarks, her *ts.*

letters, her conversational elegance, gave indication of a mind thoroughly furnished with information and trained by

severe discipline. And yet, from all the glimpses we can catch of her early education, it would seem that, with the exception of the accomplishments of music, dancing, and drawing, she was left very much to the guidance of her own instinctive tastes. But, like Madame Roland, she was blessed with that peculiar mental constitution, which led her, of her own accord, to treasure up all knowledge which books or conversation brought within her reach. From childhood until the hour of her death, she was ever improving her mind by careful observation and studious reading. She played upon the harp with great skill, and sang with a voice of exquisite melody. She also read with a correctness of elocution and a fervor of feeling which ever attracted admiration. The morning of her childhood was indeed bright and sunny, and her gladdened heart became so habituated to joyousness, that her cheerful spirit seldom failed her even in the darkest days of her calamity. Her passionate love for flowers had interested her deeply in the study of botany, and she also became very skillful in embroidery, that accomplishment which was once deemed an essential part of the education of every lady.

Under such influences Josephine *Euphemie*. became a child of such grace, beauty, and *She becomes* loveliness of character as to attract the *Josephine's* attention and the admiration of all who *bosom* saw her. There was an affectionateness, *companion*. simplicity, and frankness in her manners which won all hearts. Her most intimate companion in these early years was a young mulatto girl, the daughter of a slave, and report said, with how much truth it is impossible to know,

that she was also the daughter of Captain Tascher before his marriage. Her name was Euphemie. She was a year or two older than Josephine, but she attached herself with deathless affection to her patroness; and, though Josephine made her a companion and a confidante, she gradually passed, even in these early years, into the position of a maid of honor, and clung devotedly to her mistress through all the changes of subsequent life. Josephine, at this time secluded from all companionship with young ladies of her own rank and age, made this humble but active-minded and intelligent girl her bosom companion. They rambled together, the youthful mistress and her maid, in perfect harmony. From Josephine's more highly-cultivated mind the lowly-born child derived intellectual stimulus, and thus each day became a more worthy and congenial associate. As years passed on, and Josephine ascended into higher regions of splendor, her humble attendant gradually retired into more obscure positions, though she was ever regarded by her true-hearted mistress with great kindness.

Josephine was a universal favorite with all the little negro girls of the plantation. They looked up to her as to a protectress whom they loved, and to whom they owed entire homage. She would frequently collect a group of them under the shade of the luxuriant trees of that tropical island, and teach them the dances which she had learned, and also join with them as a partner. She loved to assemble them around her, and listen to those simple negro melodies which penetrate every heart which can feel the power of music. Again, all their

*Popularity of*

*Josephine.*

*Childhood*

*enjoyment.*

*Characteristic*

*traits.*

voices, in sweet harmony, blended with hers as she taught them the more scientific songs of Europe. She would listen with unaffected interest to their tales of sorrow, and weep with them. Often she interposed in their behalf that their tasks might be lightened, or that a play-day might be allowed them. Thus she was as much beloved and admired in the cabin of the poor negro as she was in her uncle's parlor, where intelligence and refinement were assembled. This same character she displayed through the whole of her career. Josephine upon the plantation and Josephine upon the throne—Josephine surrounded by the sable maidens of Martinique, and Josephine moving in queenly splendor in the palaces of Versailles, with all the courtiers of Europe revolving around her, displayed the same traits of character, and by her unaffected kindness won the hearts alike of the lowly and of the exalted.

About this time an occurrence took *The fortune-* place which has attracted far more *teller.* attention than it deserves. Josephine was one day walking under the shade of the trees of the plantation, when she saw a number of negro children gathered around an aged and withered negress, who had great reputation among the slaves as a fortune-teller. Curiosity induced Josephine to draw near the group to hear what the sorceress had to say. The old sibyl, with the cunning which is characteristic of her craft, as soon as she saw Josephine approach, whom she knew perfectly, assumed an air of great agitation, and, seizing her hand violently, gazed with most earnest attention upon the lines traced upon the palm. The little negresses were perfectly

awe-stricken by this oracular display. Josephine, however, was only amused, and smiling, said,

"So you discover something very extraordinary in my destiny?"

"Yes!" replied the negress, with an air of great solemnity.

"Is happiness or misfortune to be my lot?" Josephine inquired.

The negress again gazed upon her *Predictions of* hand, and then replied, "Misfortune;" but, *the sibyl*. after a moment's pause, she added, "and happiness too."

"You must be careful, my good woman," Josephine rejoined, "not to commit yourself. Your predictions are not very intelligible."

The negress, raising her eyes with an expression of deep mystery to heaven, rejoined, "I am not permitted to render my revelations more clear."

In every human heart there is a vein of *Credulity*. credulity. The pretended prophetess had now succeeded in fairly arousing the curiosity of Josephine, who eagerly inquired, "What do you read respecting me in futurity? Tell me exactly."



THE SIBYL.

Again the negress, assuming an air of profound solemnity, said, "You will not believe me if I reveal to you your strange destiny."

"Yes, indeed, I assure you that I will," Josephine thoughtlessly replied. "Come, good mother, do tell me what I have to hope and what to fear."

"On your own head be it, then. Listen. *More* You will soon be married. That union will *predictions.* not be happy. You will become a widow, and then you will be Queen of France. Some happy years will be yours, but afterward you will die in a hospital, amid civil commotions."

The old woman then hurried away. *Their* Josephine talked a few moments with the *fulfillment.* young negroes upon the folly of this pretended fortune-telling, and leaving them, the affair passed from her mind. In subsequent years, when toiling through the vicissitudes of her most eventful life, she recalled the singular coincidence between her destiny and



the prediction, and seemed to consider that the negress, with prophetic vision, had traced out her wonderful career.

But what is there so extraordinary in *Explanations of this narrative?* What maiden ever *the predictions.* consulted a fortune-teller without receiving *How fulfilled.* the agreeable announcement that she was to wed beauty, and wealth, and rank? It was known universally, and it was a constant subject of plantation gossip, that the guardians of Josephine were contemplating a match for her with the son of a neighboring planter. The negroes did not think him half worthy of their adored and queenly Josephine. They supposed, however, that the match was settled. The artful woman was therefore compelled to allow Josephine to marry *at first* the undistinguished son of the planter, with whom she could not be happy. She, however, very considerately lets the unworthy husband in a short time die, and then Josephine becomes a queen. This is the old story, which has been repeated to half the maidens in Christendom. It is not very surprising that in this one case it should have happened to prove true.

But, unfortunately, our prophetess went *Falsity of the* a little farther, and predicted that *prediction.* Josephine would die in a hospital—implying poverty and abandonment. This part of the prediction proved to be utterly untrue. Josephine, instead of dying in a hospital, died in the beautiful palace of Malmaison. Instead of dying in poverty, she was one of the richest ladies in Europe, receiving an income of some six hundred thousand dollars a year. The grounds around her palace were embellished with all the attractions, and her apartments

furnished with every luxury which opulence could provide. Instead of dying in friendlessness and neglect, the Emperor Alexander of Russia stood at her bed-side; the most illustrious kings and nobles of Europe crowded her court and did her homage. And though she was separated from her husband, she still retained the title of Empress, and was the object of his most sincere affection and esteem.

Thus this prediction, upon which so much stress has been laid, seems to vanish in the air. It surely is not a supernatural event that a young lady, who was told by an aged negress that she would be a queen, happened actually to become one.

We have alluded to a contemplated *Contemplated* match between Josephine and the son of a *match.* neighboring planter. An English family, *Attachment* who had lost property and rank in the *between* convulsions of those times, had sought a *Josephine and* retreat in the island of Martinique, and *William.* were cultivating an adjoining plantation. In this family there was a very pleasant lad, a son, of nearly the same age with Josephine. The plantations being near to each other, they were often companions and playmates. A strong attachment grew up between them. The parents of William, and the uncle and aunt of Josephine, approved cordially of this attachment; and were desirous that these youthful hearts should be united, as soon as the parties should arrive at mature age. Josephine, in the ingenuous artlessness of her nature, disguised not in the least her strong affection for William. And his attachment to her was deep and enduring.

The solitude of their lives peculiarly tended to promote fervor of character.

Matters were in this state, when the *Their* father of William received an intimation *separation*. from England that, by returning to his own country, he might, perhaps, regain his lost estates. He immediately prepared to leave the island with his family. The separation was a severe blow to these youthful lovers. They wept, and vowed eternal fidelity.

It is not surprising that Josephine should *Rousseau* have been in some degree superstitious. *throwing* The peculiarity of her life upon the *stones*. plantation—her constant converse with the negroes, whose minds were imbued with all the superstitious notions which they had brought from Africa, united with those which they had found upon the island, tended to foster those feelings. Rousseau, the most popular and universally-read French writer of that day, in his celebrated "Confessions," records with perfect composure that he was one day sitting in a grove, meditating whether his soul would probably be saved or lost. He felt that the question was of the utmost importance. How could he escape from the uncertainty! A supernatural voice seemed to suggest an appeal to a singular kind of augury. "I will," said he, "throw this stone at that tree. If I hit the tree, it shall be a sign that my soul is to be saved. If I miss it, it shall indicate that I am to be lost." He selected a large tree, took the precaution of getting very near to it, and threw his stone plump against the trunk. "After that," says the

philosopher, "I never again had a doubt respecting my salvation."

Josephine resorted to the same kind of *Josephine's* augury to ascertain if William, who had *superstition*, become a student in the University at Oxford, still remained faithful to her. She not unfrequently attempted to beguile a weary hour in throwing pebbles at the trees, that she might divine whether William were then thinking of her. Months, however, passed away, and she received no tidings from him. Though she had often written, her letters remained unanswered. Her feelings were the more deeply wounded, since there were other friends upon the island with whom he kept up a correspondence; but Josephine never received even a message through them.

One day, as she was pensively rambling in a grove, where she had often walked with her absent lover, she found carved upon a tree the names of William and Josephine. She knew well by whose hand they had been cut, and, entirely overcome with emotion, she sat down and wept bitterly. With the point of a knife, and with a trembling hand, she inscribed in the bark these words, peculiarly characteristic of her depth of feeling, and of the gentleness of her spirit: "Unhappy William! thou hast forgotten me!"

William, however, had not forgotten her. *Mutual fidelity*. Again and again he had written in terms of *Deception of* the most ardent affection. But the friends *friends* of Josephine, meeting with an opportunity for a match for her which they deemed far more advantageous, had destroyed these communications, and also had prevented any of her letters from reaching the

hand of William. Thus each, while cherishing the truest affection, deemed the other faithless.

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## CHAPTER II.

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### THE MARRIAGE OF JOSEPHINE.

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A.D. 1775-A.D. 1785

Josephine was about fourteen years of *Alexander de* age when she was separated from William. *Beauharnais*. A year passed away, during which she *His character*. received not a line from her absent friend.

About this time a gentleman from France visited her uncle upon business of great importance. Viscount Alexander de Beauharnais was a fashionable and gallant young man, about thirty years of age, possessing much conversational ease and grace of manner, and accustomed to the most polished society of the French metropolis. He held a commission in the army, and had already signalized himself by several acts of bravery. His sympathies had been strongly aroused by the struggle of the American colonists with the mother country, and he had already aided the colonists both with his sword and his purse.

Several large and valuable estates in *A new suitor*. Martinique, adjoining the plantation of M. Renaudin, had fallen by inheritance to this young officer and his brother, the Marquis of Beauharnais. He visited Martinique to secure the proof of his title to these estates. M. Renaudin held some of these plantations on lease. In the transaction of this business, Beauharnais spent much time

at the mansion of M. Renaudin. He, of course, saw much of the beautiful Josephine, and was fascinated with her grace, and her mental and physical loveliness.

The uncle and aunt of Josephine were *Motives for the* delighted to perceive the interest which *marriage.* their niece had awakened in the bosom of the interesting stranger. His graceful figure, his accomplished person, his military celebrity, his social rank, and his large fortune, all conspired to dazzle their eyes, and to lead them to do every thing in their power to promote a match apparently so eligible. The ambition of M. Renaudin was moved at the thought of conferring upon his niece, the prospective heiress of his own fortune, an estate so magnificent as the united inheritance. Josephine, however, had not yet forgotten William, and, though interested in her uncle's guest, for some time allowed no emotion of love to flow out toward him.

One morning Josephine was sitting in *The* the library in pensive musings, when her *announcement.* uncle came into the room to open to her the subject of her contemplated marriage with M. Beauharnais. Josephine was thunderstruck at the communication, for, according to the invariable custom of the times, she knew that she could have but little voice in the choice of a partner for life. For a short time she listened in silence to his proposals, and then said, with tears in her eyes,

"Dear uncle, I implore you to remember *Feelings of* that my affections are fixed upon William. I *Josephine.* have been solemnly promised to him."

"That is utterly impossible, my child," her uncle replied. "Circumstances are changed. All our hopes are centered in you. You must obey our wishes."

"And why," said she, "have you changed your intentions in reference to William?"

Her uncle replied: "You will receive by inheritance all my estate. M. Beauharnais possesses the rich estates adjoining. Your union unites the property. M. Beauharnais is every thing which can be desired in a husband. Besides, William appears to have forgotten you."

To this last remark Josephine could make no reply. She looked sadly upon the floor and was silent. It is said that her uncle had then in his possession several letters which William had written her, replete with the most earnest spirit of constancy and affection.

Josephine, but fifteen years of age, *Zeal of M.* could not, under these circumstances, *Beauharnais.* resist the influences now brought to bear *The* upon her. M. Beauharnais was a gentleman *engagement.* of fascinating accomplishments. The reluctance of Josephine to become his bride but stimulated his zeal to obtain her. In the seclusion of the plantation, and far removed from other society, she was necessarily with him nearly at all hours. They read together, rode on horseback side by side, rambled in the groves in pleasant companionship. They floated by moonlight upon the water, breathing the balmy air of that delicious clime, and uniting their voices in song, the measure being timed with the dipping of the oars by the negroes. The friends of Josephine were importunate for the match. At last, reluctantly she gave her consent. Having



done this, she allowed her affections, unrestrained, to repose upon her betrothed. Though her heart still clung to William, she thought that he had found other friends in England, in whose pleasant companionship he had lost all remembrance of the island maiden who had won his early love.

Alexander Beauharnais, soon after his engagement to Josephine, embarked for France. Arrangements had been made for Josephine, in the course of a few months, to follow him, upon a visit to a relative in Paris, and there the nuptials were to be consummated. Josephine was now fifteen years of age. She was attached to Beauharnais, but not with that fervor of feeling which had previously agitated her heart. She often thought of William and spoke of him, and at times had misgivings lest there might be some explanation of his silence. But months had passed on, and she had received no letter or message from him.

At length the hour for her departure *Departure from* from the island arrived. With tearful eyes *Martinique.* and a saddened heart she left the land of *Parting scenes.* her birth, and the scenes endeared to her by all the recollections of childhood. Groups of negroes, from the tottering infant to the aged man of gray hairs, surrounded her with weeping and loud lamentation. Josephine hastened on board, the ship got under way, and soon the island of Martinique disappeared beneath the watery horizon. Josephine sat upon the deck in perfect silence, watching the dim outline of her beloved home till it was lost to sight. Her young heart was full of anxiety, of tenderness, and of regrets. Little, however, could she