

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydow Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **Empress Josephine An historical sketch of the days of Napoleon**

L. (Luise) Mühlbach

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THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE  
AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE DAYS OF NAPOLEON

BY

L. MUHLBACH

AUTHOR OF DAUGHTER OF AN EMPRESS, MARIE ANTOINETTE, JOSEPH II AND HIS COURT, FREDERICK THE GREAT AND HIS FAMILY BERLIN AND SANS-SOUCI, ETC

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

REV. W. BINET, A M.



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**BOOK I.**

**THE VISCONTRESS BEAUHARNAIS.**



## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

"I win the battles, Josephine wins me the hearts." These words of Napoleon are the most beautiful epitaph of the Empress Josephine, the much-loved, the much-regretted, and the much-slandered one. Even while Napoleon won battles, while with lofty pride he placed his foot on the neck of the conquered, took away from princes their crowns, and from nations their liberty—while Europe trembling bowed before him, and despite her admiration cursed him—while hatred heaved up the hearts of all nations against him—even then none could refuse admiration to the tender, lovely woman who, with the gracious smile of goodness, walked at his side; none could refuse love to the wife of the conqueror, whose countenance of brass received light and lustre from the beautiful eyes of Josephine, as Memnon's statue from the rays of the sun.

She was not beautiful according to those high and exalted rules of beauty which we admire in the statues of the gods of old, but her whole being was surrounded with such a charm, goodness, and grace, that the rules of beauty were forgotten. Josephine's beauty was believed in, and the heart was ravished by the spell of such a gracious, womanly apparition. Goethe's words, which the Princess Eleonore utters in reference to Antonio, were not applicable to Josephine:

"All the gods have with one consent brought gifts to his cradle, but, alas! the Graces have remained absent, and where the gifts of these lovely ones fail, though much was given and much received, yet on such a bosom is no resting-place."

No, the Graces were not absent from the cradle of Josephine; they, more than all the other gods, had brought their gifts to Josephine. They had encircled her with the girdle of gracefulness, they had imparted to her look, to her smile, to her figure, attraction and charm, and given her that beauty which is greater and more enduring than that of youth, namely loveliness, that only real beauty.

Josephine possessed the beauty of grace, and this quality remained when youth, happiness, and grandeur, had deserted her. This beauty of grace struck the Emperor Alexander as he came to Malmaison to salute the dethroned empress. He had entered Paris in triumph, and laid his foot on the neck of him whom he once had called his friend, yet before the divorced wife of the dethroned emperor the czar, full of admiration and respect, bowed his head and made her homage as to a queen; for, though she was dethroned, on her head shone the crown in imperishable beauty and glory, the crown of loveliness, of faithfulness, and of womanhood.

She was not witty in the special sense of a so-called "witty woman." She composed no verses, she wrote no philosophical dissertations, she painted not, she was no politician, she was no practising artist, but she possessed the deep and fine intuition of all that which is beautiful and noble: she was the protectress of the arts and sciences. She knew that disciples were not wanting to the arts, but that often a Maecenas is needed. She left it to her cousin, the Countess Fanny Beauharnais, to be called an artist; hers was a loftier destiny, and she fulfilled that destiny through her whole life—she was a Maecenas, the protectress of the arts and sciences.

As Hamlet says of his father, "He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again;" thus Josephine's fame consists not that she was a princess, an empress anointed by the hands of the pope himself, but that she was a noble and true wife, loving yet more than she was loved, entirely given up in unswerving loyalty to him who rejected her; languishing for very sorrow on account of his misfortune, and dying for very grief as vanished away the star of his happiness. Thousands in her place, rejected, forgotten, cast away, as she was—thousands would have rejoiced in the righteousness of the fate which struck and threw in the dust the man who, for earthly grandeur, had abandoned the beloved one and disowned her love. Josephine wept over him, lamented over his calamities, and had but a wish to be allowed to share them with him. Josephine died broken-hearted—the misfortunes of her beloved, who no more loved her, the misfortunes of Napoleon, broke her heart.

She was a woman, "take her for all in all"—a noble, a beautiful woman, a loving woman, and such as belongs to no peculiar class, to no peculiar nation, to no peculiar special history; she belongs to the world, to humanity, to universal history. In the presence of such an apparition all national hatred is silent, all differences of political opinion are silent. Like a great, powerful drama drawn from the universal history of man and represented before our eyes, so her life passes before us; and surprised, wondering, we gaze on, indifferent whether the heroine of such a tragedy be Creole, French, or to what nation she may owe her birth. She belongs to the world, to history, and if we Germans have no love for the Emperor Napoleon, the tyrant of the world, the Caesar of brass who bowed the people down into the dust, and trod under foot their rights and liberties—if we Germans have no love for the conqueror Napoleon, because he won so many battles from us, yet this does not debar us from loving Josephine, who during her lifetime won hearts to Napoleon, and whose beautiful death for love's sake filled with tears the eyes of those whose lips knew but words of hatred and cursing against the emperor.

To write the life of Josephine does not mean to write the life of a Frenchwoman, the life of the wife of the man who brought over Germany so much adversity, shame, and suffering, but it means to write a woman's life which, as a fated tragedy or like a mighty picture, rises before our vision. It is to unfold a portion of the world's history before our eyes—and the world's history is there for our common instruction and progress, for our enlightenment and encouragement.

I am not afraid, therefore, of being accused of lacking patriotism, because I have undertaken to write the life of a woman who is not a German, who was the wife of Germany's greatest enemy and oppressor. It is, indeed, a portion of the universal drama which is unfolded in the life of this woman, and amid so much blood, so much dishonor, so many tears, so much humiliation, so much pride, arrogance, and treachery, of this renowned period of the world's history, shines forth the figure of Josephine as the bright star of womanhood, of love, of faithfulness—stars need no birthright, no nationality, they belong to all lands and nations.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE YOUNG MAID.

On the 23d of July, 1763, to the Chevalier Tascher de la Pagerie, ex-lieutenant of the royal troops, a resident of the insignificant spot of the Trois Islets, on the island of Martinique, was borne by his young, rich, and beautiful wife, a first child.

The loving parents, the relatives and friends had longed for this child, but now that it was come, they bade it welcome without joy, and even over the brow of the young father hung the shadow of a cloud as he received the intelligence of the birth of his child. For it was a girl, and not the wished-for boy who was to be the inheritor of the valuable family-plantation, and the inheritor also of the ancient and respectable name of Tascher de la Pagerie.

It was, however, useless to murmur against fate. What was irrevocable had to be accepted, and welcome made to the daughter, who, instead of the expected heir, would now lay claim to the rights of primogeniture. As an inheritance reserved for him who had not come, the daughter received the name which had been destined to the son. For two hundred years the name of Joseph had been given to the eldest son of the family of Tascher de la Pagerie, but now that there was none to whom the Chevalier, Ex-lieutenant Joseph de la Pagerie could leave his name as a legacy, the family had to be satisfied to give the name to his daughter, and consequently she received at baptism the name of Joseph Marie Rosa.

There was, however, one being who gladly and willingly forgave the fault of her birth, and who consecrated to the daughter the same love she would have offered to the son. This being was the mother of the little Joseph Marie Rosa.

"Contrary to all our wishes," writes she to her husband's sister, the beautiful Madame Renaudin, in Paris—"contrary to all our wishes, God has given me a daughter. My joy is not therefore diminished, for I look upon my child as a new bond which binds me still closer to your brother, my dear husband, and to you. Why should I have such a poor and meagre opinion of the female sex,

that a daughter should not be welcomed by me? I am acquainted with many persons of our sex who concentrate in themselves as many good qualities as one would only with difficulty find in the other sex. Maternal love already blinds me and fosters in me the hope that my daughter may be like them, and if even I cannot enjoy this satisfaction, yet I am thankful to my child that by means of her existence I am gathering so much happiness."

Indeed, extraordinary joy, since the birth of the child, reigned in the house of M. Tascher de la Pagerie; joy reigned all over Martinique, for the long war between France and England was ended, and a few months before the birth of little Joseph Marie Rosa, the peace which secured to France the possession of her maritime colonies had been signed. Martinique, so often attacked, bombarded, besieged by English ships—Martinique was again the unconditional property of France, and on the birthday of the little Marie Joseph Rosa the French fleet entered into the harbor of Port Royal, landed a French garrison for the island, and brought a new governor in the person of the Marquis de Fenelon, the nephew of the famous Bishop de Fenelon.

Joyously and quietly passed away the first years of the life of the little Joseph, or little Josephine, as her kind parents called her. Only once, in the third year of her life, was Josephine's infancy troubled by a fright. A terrible hurricane, such as is known to exist only in the Antilles, broke over Martinique. The historians of that period know not how to depict the awful and calamitous events of this hurricane, which, at the same time, seemed to shake the whole earth with its convulsions. In Naples, in Sicily, in the Molucca Islands, volcanoes broke out in fearful eruptions; for three days the earth trembled in Constantinople. But it was over Martinique that the hurricane raged in the most appalling manner. In less than four hours the howling northwest' wind, accompanied by forked lightning, rolling thunder, heavy water-spouts, and tremendous earth-tremblings, had hurled down into fragments all the houses of the town, all the sugar-plantations, and all the negro cabins. Here and there the earth opened, flames darted out and spread round about a horrible vapor of sulphur, which suffocated human beings. Trees were uprooted, and the sugar and coffee plantations destroyed. The sea roared and upheaved, sprang from its bounds, and shivered as

mere glass-work barks and even some of the larger ships lying in the harbor of Port Royal. Five hundred men perished, and a much larger number were severely wounded. Distress and poverty were the result of this astounding convulsion of nature.

The estate of M. Tascher de la Pagerie was made desolate. His residence, his sugar-plantations, were but a heap of ruins and rubbish, and as a gift of Providence he looked upon the one refuge left him in his sugar-refinery, which was miraculously spared by the hurricane. There M. Tascher saved himself, with Josephine and her younger sister, and there his wife bore him a third child. But Heaven even now did not fulfil the long-cherished wishes of the parents, for it was to a daughter that Madame de la Pagerie gave birth. The parents were, however, weary with murmuring against fate, which accomplished not their wish; and so to prove to fate that this daughter was welcome, they named the child born amid the horrors of this terrific hurricane, Desiree, the Desired.

Peaceful, happy years followed;—peaceful and happy, in the midst of the family, passed on the years of Josephine's infancy. She had every thing which could be procured. Beloved by her parents, by her two sisters, worshipped by her servants and slaves, she lived amid a beautiful, splendid, and sublime nature, in the very midst of wealth and affluence. Her father, casting away all ambition, was satisfied to cultivate his wide and immense domains, and to remain among his one hundred and fifty slaves as master and ruler, to whom unconditional and cheerful obedience was rendered. Her mother sought and wished for no other happiness than the peaceful quietude of the household joys. Her husband, her children, her home, constituted the world where she breathed, in which alone centred her thoughts, her wishes, and her hopes. To mould her daughters into good housekeepers and wives, and if possible to secure for them in due time, by means of a brilliant and advantageous marriage, a happy future—this was the only ambition of this gentle and virtuous woman.

Above all things, it was necessary to procure to the daughters an education suited to the claims of high social position, and which would fit her daughters to act on the world's stage the part which their birth, their wealth, and beauty, reserved for them. The tender

mother consented to part with her darling, with her eldest daughter; and Josephine, not yet twelve years old, was brought, for completing her education, to the convent of our Lady de la Providence in Port Royal. There she learned all which in the Antilles was considered necessary for the education of a lady of rank; there she obtained that light, superficial, rudimentary instruction, which was then thought sufficient for a woman; there she was taught to write her mother tongue with a certain fluency and without too many blunders; there she was instructed in the use of the needle, to execute artistic pieces of embroidery; there she learned something in arithmetic and in music; yea, so as to give to the wealthy daughter of M. Tascher de la Pagerie a full and complete education, the pious sisters of the convent consented that twice a week a dancing-master should come to the convent to give to Josephine lessons in dancing, the favorite amusement of the Creoles. [Footnote: "Histoire de l'Imperatrice Josephine," par Joseph Aubenas. vol. i., p. 36.]

These dancing-lessons completed the education of Josephine, and, barely fifteen years old, she returned to her parents and sisters as an accomplished young lady, to perform the honors of the house alongside of her mother, to learn from her to preside with grace and ease over a large mansion, and above all things to be a good mistress, a benefactress, and a protectress to her slaves. Under her mother's guidance, Josephine visited the negro cabins to minister unto the sick, to bring comfort and nourishment to the old and to the weak, to pray with the dying, to take under her loving guardianship the new-born babes of the negro women, to instruct in the catechism the grown-up children, to excite them to industry, to encourage them through kindness and friendliness, to protect them, and to be a mediator when for some offence they were condemned to severe punishment.

It was a wonderfully peaceful and beautiful life that of the young Josephine, amid a bountiful nature, in that soft, sunny clime which clothed her whole being with that tender, pleasing grace, that lovely quietude, that yielding complacency, and at the same time with that fiery, passionate nature of the Creoles. Ordinarily dressed only with the "gaule," a wide, loose garment of white muslin, falling loosely about the waist, where no belt gathered its folds, the beautiful head wrapped up in the many-colored madras, which around the tem-

ples was folded up into graceful knots holding together her chestnut-brown hair—in this dress Josephine would swing for hours in her hammock made of homespun silk and ornamented with borders of feathers from the variegated iridescent birds of Cayenne.

Round about her were her young female slaves, watching with their brilliant dark eyes their young mistress, ever ready to read every wish upon that dreamy, smiling countenance, and by their swarthy tinge heightening the soft, tender whiteness of her own complexion.

Then, wearied with the stillness and with her dreams, Josephine would spring up from the hammock, dart into the house with all the lightness of the gazelle to enliven the family with her own joyousness, her merry pleasantry, and accompanied by her guitar to sing unto them with her lovely youthful voice the songs of the Creoles. As the glowing sun was at its setting, away she hastened with her slaves into the garden, directed their labors, and with her own hands tended her own cherished flowers, which commingled together in admirable admixture from all climes under the genial skies of the Antilles. In the evening, the family was gathered together in the light of the moon, which imparted to the nights the brightness of day and streamed upon them her soft blue rays, upon the fragrant terrace, in front of the house, where the faithful slaves carefully watched the little group close one to another and guarded their masters from the approaches of poisonous serpents, that insidious progeny of the night.

On Sundays after Josephine had religiously and faithfully listened to an early mass, she gladly attended in the evening the "barra-boula" of the negroes, dancing their African dances in the glare of torches and to the monotonous sound of the tam-tam.

On festivals, she assisted her mother to put all things in order, and to preside at the great banquets given to relatives and friends, who afterward were visited in their turn, and then the slaves carried their masters in hammocks, or else, what was far more acceptable, the young maidens mounted small Spanish horses, full of courage and daring, and whose firm, quick step made a ride to Porto Rico simply a rushing gallop.

Amidst this dreamy, sunny, joyous existence of the young maiden gleamed one day, as a lightning-flash, a prophetic ray of Josephine's future greatness.

This happened one afternoon as she was walking alone and thoughtful through the plantation. A group of negroes, in the centre of which was an old and unknown woman, attracted her attention. Josephine approached. It was an old negro woman from a neighboring plantation, and she was telling the fortune of the young negro women of M. Tascher de la Pagerie. No sooner did the old woman cast her eyes on Josephine than she seemed to shrink into one mass, whilst an expression of horror and wonder stole over her face. She vehemently seized the hand of the young maiden, examined it carefully, and then lifted up her large, astonished eyes with a searching expression to the face of Josephine.

"You must see something very wonderful in my face and in my hand?" inquired Josephine, laughing.

"Yes, something very wonderful," repeated the negro woman, still intently staring at her.

"Is it a good or a bad fortune which awaits me?"

The old prophetess slowly shook her head.

"Who can tell," said she, gravely, "what is a good or a bad fortune for human beings? In your hand I see evil, but in your face happiness—great, lofty happiness."

"Well," cried out Josephine, laughing, "you are cautious, and your oracle is not very clear."

The old woman lifted up her eyes to heaven with a strange expression.

"I dare not," said she, "express myself more clearly."

"Speak on, whatever the result!" exclaimed Josephine, whose curiosity was excited by the very diffidence of the fortune-teller. "Say what you see in my future life. I wish it, I order you to do so."

"Well, if you order it, I must obey," said she, with solemnity. "Listen, then. I read in your countenance that you are called to high

destinies. You will soon be married. But your marriage will not be a happy one. You will soon be a young widow, and then—"

"Well, and then?" asked Josephine, passionately, as the old woman hesitated and remained silent.

"Well, and then you will be Queen of France—more than a queen!" shouted the prophetess, with a loud voice. "You will live glorious, brilliant days, but at the last misfortune will come and carry you to your grave in a day of rebellion."

Afraid of the pictures which her prophetic vision had contemplated in the future, the old hag forced her way through the circle of negro women around, and rushed away through the field as fast as her feet could bear her on.

Josephine, laughing, turned to her astonished women, who had followed with their eyes the flight of the prophetess, but who now directed their dark eyes with an expression of awe and bewilderment to their young mistress, of whom the fortune-teller had said she would one day be Queen of France. Josephine endeavored to overthrow the faith of her swarthy servants in the fortune-teller, and, by pointing to the ridiculous prophecy in reference to herself, and which predicted an impossible future, she tried to prove to them what a folly it was to rely on the words of those who made a profession of foretelling the future.

But against her will the prophetic words of the old woman echoed in the heart of the young maiden. She could not return home to her family and talk, laugh, and dance, as she had been accustomed to do with her sisters. Followed by her slaves, she went into her garden and sank in a hammock, hung amid the gigantic leaves of a palm-tree, and, while the negro girls danced and sang round her, the young maid was dreaming about the future, and her beating heart asked if it were not possible that the prophecy of the negro woman might one day be realized.

She, the daughter of M. Tascher de la Pagerie—she a future "Queen of France! More than a queen!" Oh, it was mere folly to think on such things, and to busy herself with the ludicrous prophecies of the old woman.