



Napoleon's Other Wife: The Story of Marie-Louise, Duchess of Parma, the Lesser Known Wife of Napoleon Bonaparte

Deborah Jay

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Marie-Louise's battle against adversity and pursuit of happiness outside conventional morality will appeal to anyone interested in an extraordinary story. It will also appeal to those interested in Napoleon who are prepared to open their minds to the other important facets of his very complex personality. Furthermore, Marie-Louise's tale is an inspiration to the woman of today. *Napoleon's Other Wife* is also ideally suited as recommended reading for "A" and higher level studies in the French Revolution, Napoleonic period and Italian Risorgimento.

Eighteen-year-old Habsburg Archduchess Marie-Louise leaves Vienna in 1810 to marry Napoleon Bonaparte, now Emperor of France. Among the crowds who welcome her are those who rejoiced as her great aunt Marie-Antoinette's severed head was flaunted seventeen years earlier. Marie-Louise believes her duty is to cement peace between Austria and France, but Klemens Metternich, foreign minister to her father, Emperor Francis, has other ideas. He has engineered this marriage to change the course of European history. Within a year, Marie-Louise produces the dynastic heir expected of her and long desired by Napoleon. But his ill conceived invasion of Russia changes his fortunes irreversibly. Marie-Louise is forced to choose between her father and her husband when Emperor Francis declares war on Napoleon. She will have to fight for her existence for the rest of her life, not only for herself, but also for her son, to protect him against the Allies' vengeance. Despite the impossible pressures and irreconcilable demands upon her, she refuses to be cowed, strikes out for her own happiness and rides the currents which threaten to undo her. Her achievements are nothing short of heroic.

This compelling narration of Marie-Louise's story in *Napoleon's Other Wife*, is unique, addressing the devastating impact of Napoleon's legacy on her private and political existence and revealing a woman of extraordinary resilience and courage.

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