

# Sublime Intervention

## A Romantic-Adventure of the Napoleonic and Hanovarian Age

by Vernanne Bryan

### CHAPTER XIV

Mme. de Staël had first met Napoleon at a reception given by Talleyrand. She remembered he had spoken words of praise regarding her father which had left her somewhat speechless. When she had finally managed to find her voice under the unnerving intensity of his powerful eyes, she had managed only a foolish question. "Who is the greatest woman, alive or dead?" His answer had been annoyingly playful, "The one who has made the most children." Four days later, when he had received the acclaim of the Directors in the court at Luxembourg Palace, she had felt confused by a man who seemed both modest and filled with pride. Still, she had known without a doubt that he carried with him France's destiny. Now as she sat waiting outside his study at Malmaison, she wondered if she would ever be able to claim him as one of her victories. The puzzlement was again being experienced within her in a mixture of fear and admiration.

Finally she was called and as she walked into his study, she felt the same lusty impulses which she was quite certain had led her to banishment from his presence. Germaine knew she must watch her step and keep her curiosity in check regarding his enterprises. All she wanted now from this man was the acceptance of her triumphant return to Paris with Darcy Touissant.

Napoleon's study was rich in gilt appointments. Lavish inlaid wood flooring accented with lush imported rugs upheld a high arched ceiling suspended over huge columns and walls filled with glass enclosed bookcases. She quickly noted that he had yet to arrive into this imposing room. Germaine selected a chair in the sitting area adjoining the vaulted alcove of the study where Napoleon's large desk stood. It took her only moments to arrange her skirts around the chair and carefully take a reserved and humble pose. Seconds later, she was alerted by the approach of booted footsteps coming from an antechamber toward the study doors.

Again she was struck by the shortness of the man at his entry. His chestnut hair, once falling over his shoulders, was clipped short with one remaining long lock dangling over his forehead. Studying his face she noted that his brows were arching over somber and resolute eyes, while his mouth was closed tight as if his mind had come firmly to a decision. All dismay at his height left her as she took in his broad shoulders and well developed chest and disappeared completely when his commanding eyes at last fell upon her. As usual, he was simply dressed in reflection of the Ancien Regime.

"Madame." he said quietly, yet in such a manner as to suggest to Germaine that she should move herself to the chair in front of his desk where he was now seated.

For a man of action, Germaine knew it was true that Napoleon was of the highest intellect. Not only was he brilliant, but he had the reputation of being very perceptive. As she moved fluidly, retaking her seat before his desk, she wondered if he had perceived all her intent at coming. But, as one who had been held under the state of his banishment, she remained silent until he elected to address her.

"I understand that you have brought back to France one of our dearest citizens and that not only have you returned her to us, but she now facilitates a salon of great import. You have my deepest appreciation."

Germaine visually relaxed, pleased at his great sensitivity. She opened her mouth to retort, but Napoleon held up his handsome hand to silence her. "I mediate in these kinds of matters a great deal, madame, and I believe I am more than equal to this occasion. I have thought the matter over of your return to Paris and the ramifications of your doing so. You have caused me serious concern with your public opposition."

Again, Germaine attempted to speak and again the handsome hand rose to silence her.

Studying her intently for a moment, Napoleon went on, "No magic sage has suddenly revealed to me your reasons for coming here, only my own reflection on the matter. My sources tell me that Mademoiselle Touissant has caught the eye of one of France's very important noble families. I also comprehend that Mademoiselle Touissant was given in troth to Monsieur Rand Hamilton before the Revolution and that he now seeks to uphold the betrothal."

"But . . ." was all that Germaine was allowed.

"Yes, yes, madame, I do know these things. And, yes, you have succeeded in doing something I could not accomplish. In return for my blessings upon his betrothal, Monsieur Hamilton has agreed to return to France and become a member of my Legion of Honor. In return for my gratitude, you may remain in Paris as long as you do not openly oppose me."

Once more Napoleon silenced Germaine.

Frowning slightly, he went on, "And, you are not to open another salon. Are we agreed or will your vanity or stratagem once again stand in your way of return? Please respond only with yes or no."

"Yes," Germaine answered readily, knowing full well she could easily flourish in Darcy's salon.

Dismissing the interfering hussy with a mere nod of his head, his lips spread into a smile as he watched her proud back retreat from his study. As the doors quietly closed behind her, his face once more became somber. Most assuredly he would not let her know how very pleased he was to have the House of Stuart back under his guardianship and into his control.