

tez, burned behind her; yet it threw a magic light far away over into her future, and as Josephine stood there with her little Hortense in her arms, and sent her last farewell to the island where her early days had been spent, she bethought her of the old mulatto-woman who had whispered in her ear one day:

“You will go back to France, and, ere long after that, all France will be at your feet. You will be greater there than a queen.”

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPHECY.

It was toward the close of the year 1790 that Josephine, with her little daughter, Hortense, arrived in Paris and took up her residence in a small dwelling. There she soon received the intelligence of the rescue of her mother, and of the re-establishment of peace in Martinique. In France, however, the revolution and the guillotine still raged, and the banner of the Reign of Terror—the red flag—still cast its bloody shadow over Paris. Its inhabitants were terror-stricken; no one knew in the evening that he would still be at liberty on the following day, or that he would live to see another sunset. Death lay in wait at every door, and reaped its dread harvest in every house and in every family. In the face of these horrors, Josephine forgot all her earlier

griefs, all the insults and humiliations to which she had been subjected by her husband; the old love revived in her breast, and, as it might well be that on the morrow death would come knocking at her own door, she wished to devote the present moment to a reconciliation with her husband, and a reunion with her son.

But all her attempts in this direction were in vain. The viscount had felt her flight to Martinique to be too grave an injury, too great an insult, to be now willing to consent to a reconciliation with his wife. Sympathizing friends arranged a meeting between them, without, however, previously informing the viscount of their design. His anger was therefore great when, on entering the parlor of Count Montmorin, in response to that gentleman's invitation, he found there the wife he had so obstinately and wrathfully avoided. He was about to retire hastily, when a charming child rushed forward, greeted him tenderly in silvery tones, and threw herself into his arms. The viscount was now powerless to fly; he pressed his child, his Hortense, to his heart, and when the child, with a winning smile, entreated him to kiss her mamma as he had kissed her; when he saw the beautiful countenance of Josephine wet with tears; when he heard his father's voice saying, “My son, reconcile yourself with my daughter! Josephine is my daughter, and I would not call her so if she were unworthy,” and when he saw his handsome son, Eugene, gazing at him wistfully, his head resting on his mother's shoulder, his heart relented. Leading little Hortense by the hand, he stepped forward

to his wife, and, with a loud cry of joy and a blissful greeting of love, Josephine sank on his bosom.

Peace was re-established, and husband and wife were now united in a closer bond of love than ever before. The storms seemed to have spent their rage, and the heaven of their happiness was clear and cloudless. But this heaven was soon to be overcast with the black shadow of the revolution.

Viscount Beauharnais, returned by the nobility of Blois to the new legislative body, the Estates-General, resigned this position, in order to serve his country with his sword instead of his tongue. With the rank of adjutant-general, he repaired to the Army of the North, accompanied by Josephine's blessings and tears. A dread premonition told her that she would never see the general again, and this premonition did not deceive her. The spirit of anarchy and insurrection not only raged among the people of Paris, but also in the army. The aristocrats, who were given over to the guillotine in Paris, were also regarded with distrust and hatred in the army, and Viscount Beauharnais, who, for his gallantry on the battle-field of Soissons, had been promoted to the position of commanding general, was accused by his own officers of being an enemy of France and of the new order of things. He was arrested, taken back to Paris, and thrown into the prison of the Luxembourg, where so many other victims of the revolution lay in confinement.

The sad intelligence of her husband's misfortune soon reached Josephine, and aroused her love to energetic

action in his behalf. She mentally vowed to liberate her husband, the father of her children, or to die with him. She courageously confronted all dangers, all suspicions, and was happy when she found him in his prison, where she visited him, whispering words of consolation and hope in his ear.

But at that time love and fidelity were also capital crimes, and Josephine's guilt was twofold: first, because she was an aristocrat herself, and secondly, because she loved and wept for the fate of an aristocrat, and an alleged traitor to his country. Josephine was arrested and thrown into the prison of St. Pelagie.

Eugene and Hortense were now little better than orphans, for the prisoners of the Luxembourg and St. Pelagie, at that time, only left their prisons to mount the scaffold. Alone, deprived of all help, avoided by all whom they had once known and loved, the two children were threatened with misery, want, and even with hunger, for the estate of their parents had been confiscated, and, in the same hour in which Josephine was conducted to prison, the entrances and doors of their dwelling were sealed, and the poor children left to find a sheltering roof for themselves. But yet they were not entirely helpless, not quite friendless, for a friend of Josephine, a Madame Holstein, had the courage to come to the rescue, and take the children into her own family.

But it was necessary to go to work cautiously and wisely, in order to avoid exciting the hatred and vengeance of those who, coming from the scum of the peo-

ple, were now the rulers of France. An imprudent word, a look, might suffice to cast suspicion upon, and render up to the guillotine, this good Madame Holstein, this courageous friend of the two children. It was in itself a capital crime that she had taken the children of the accused into her house, and it was therefore necessary to adopt every means of conciliating the authorities. It was thought necessary that Hortense should, in company with her protectress, attend the festivals and patriotic processions, that were renewed at every decade in honor of the one and indivisible republic, but she was never required to take an active part in these celebrations. She was not considered worthy to figure among the daughters of the people; she had not yet been forgiven for being the daughter of a viscount, of an imprisoned *ci-devant*. Eugene had been apprenticed to a carpenter, and the son of the viscount was now often seen walking through the streets in a blouse, carrying a board on his shoulder or a saw under his arm.

While the children of the accused were thus enjoying temporary security, the future of their parents was growing darker and darker, and not only the life of the general, but also that of his wife, was now seriously endangered. Josephine had been removed from the prison of St. Pelagie to that of the Carmelites, and this brought her a step nearer the scaffold. But she did not tremble for herself, she thought only of her children and her husband; she wrote affectionate letters to the former, which she bribed her jailer to forward to their destina-

tion, but all her efforts to place herself in communication with her husband were abortive. One day she received the fearful intelligence that her husband had just been conducted before the revolutionary tribunal. Josephine waited for further intelligence in an agony of suspense. Had this tribunal acquitted her husband, or had it condemned him to death? Was he already free, or was he free in a higher sense—was he dead? If he were free, he would have found means to inform her of the fact; and if he were dead, his name would certainly have been mentioned in the list of the condemned. In this agony of suspense, Josephine passed the long day. Night came, but brought no rest for her and her companions in misery—the other occupants of the prison—who also looked death in the face, and who watched with her throughout the long night.

The society assembled in this prison was brilliant and select. There were the Dowager Duchess de Choiseul, the Viscountess de Maille, whose seventeen-years-old daughter had just been guillotined; there was the Marquise de Créqui, the intellectual lady who has often been called the last marquise of the *ancien régime*, and who in her witty memoirs wrote the French history of the eighteenth century as viewed from an aristocratic standpoint. There was Abbé Têxier, who, when the revolutionists threatened him with the lantern, because he had refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new constitution, replied: "Will you see any better after having hung me to the lantern?" And there was yet another,

a M. Duvivier, a pupil of Cagliostro, who, like his master, could read the future, and with the assistance of a decanter full of water and a "dove," that is, an innocent young girl of less than seven, could solve the mysteries of fate.

To him, to the Grand Cophta, Josephine now addressed herself after this day of dread uncertainty, and demanded information of the fate of her husband.

In the stillness of the night the gloomy, desolate hall of the prison now presented a strange aspect. The jailer, bribed with an assignat of fifty francs, then worth only forty sous, however, had consented that his little six-years-old daughter should serve the Grand Cophta as "dove," and had made all other preparations. A table stood in the middle of the hall, on which was a decanter filled with clear, fresh water, around which were three candles in the form of a triangle, and placed as near the decanter as possible, in order that the dove should be able to see the better. The little girl, just aroused from sleep and brought from her bed in her night-gown, sat on a chair close to the table, and behind her stood the earnest, sombre figure of the Grand Cophta. Around the table stood the prisoners, these duchesses and marquises, these ladies of the court of Versailles who had preserved their aristocratic manners in the prison, and were even here so strictly observant of etiquette, that those of them who had enjoyed the honor of the *tabouret* in the Tuileries, were here accorded the same precedence, and all possible consideration shown them.

On the other side of the table, in breathless suspense, her large, dark eyes fastened on the child with a touching expression, stood the unhappy Josephine, and, at some distance behind the ladies, the jailer with his wife.

Now the Grand Cophta laid both hands on the child's head and cried in a loud voice, "Open your eyes and look!"

The child turned pale and shuddered as it fixed its gaze on the decanter.

"What do you see?" asked the Grand Cophta. "I want you to look into the prison of General Beauharnais. What do you see?"

"I see a little room," said the child with vivacity. "On a cot lies a young man who sleeps; at his side stands another man, writing on a sheet of paper that lies on a large book."

"Can you read?"

"No, citizen. Now the man cuts off his hair, and folds it in the paper."

"The one who sleeps?"

"No, the one who was just now writing. He is now writing something on the back of the paper in which he wrapped the hair; now he opens a little red pocket-book, and takes papers out of it; they are assignats, he counts them and then puts them back in the pocket-book. Now he rises and walks softly, softly."

"What do you mean by softly? You have not heard the slightest noise as yet, have you?"

"No, but he walks through the room on tiptoe."

"What do you see now?"

"He now covers his face with his hands and seems to be weeping."

"But what did he do with his pocket-book?"

"Ah, he has put the pocket book and the package with the hair in the pocket of the coat that lies on the sleeping man's bed."

"Of what color is this coat?"

"I cannot see, exactly; it is red or brown, lined with blue silk and covered with shining buttons."

"That will do," said the Grand Cophta; "you can go to bed, child."

He stooped down over the child and breathed on her forehead. The little girl seemed to awaken as from a trance, and hurried to her parents, who led her from the hall.

"General Beauharnais still lives!" said the Grand Cophta, addressing Josephine.

"Yes, he still lives," cried she, sadly, "but he is preparing for death." *

Josephine was right. A few days later Duchess d'Anville received a package and a letter. It was sent to her by a prisoner in La Force, named De Legrois. He had occupied the same cell with General Beauharnais and had found the package and the letter, addressed to the duchess, in his pocket on the morning of the execution of the general.

* This scene is exactly as represented by the Marquise de Créqui, who was present and relates it in her memoirs, vol. vi., p. 238.

In this letter the general conjured Duchess D'Anville to deliver to Josephine the package which contained his hair and his last adieus to wife and children.

This was the only inheritance which General Beauharnais could bequeath to his Josephine and her unhappy children!

Josephine was so agitated by the sight of her husband's hair and his last fond words of adieu, that she fainted away, a stream of blood gushing from her mouth.

Her companions in misfortune vied with each other in giving her the most tender attention, and demanded of the jailer that a physician should be called.

"Why a physician!" said the man, indifferently. "Death is the best physician. He called the general to-day; in a few days he will restore to him his wife."

This prophecy was almost verified. Josephine, scarcely recovered from her illness, received her citation from the Tribunal of Terror. This was the herald of certain death, and she courageously prepared for the grave, troubled only by thoughts of the children she must leave behind.

A fortunate and unforeseen occurrence saved her. The men of the revolution had now attained the summit of their power, and, as there was no standing still for them, they sank into the abyss which themselves had digged.

The fall of Robespierre opened the prisons and set at liberty thousands of the already condemned victims of the revolution.

Viscountess Josephine left her prison; she was re-

stored to liberty, and could now hasten to her children, but she came back to them as a poor widow, for the seals of the "one and indivisible republic" were on hers and her children's property as well as on that of all other aristocrats.

CHAPTER III.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLUTION.

FRANCE drew a breath of relief; the Reign of Terror was at an end, and a milder and more moderate government wielded the sceptre over the poor land that had so lately lain in the agonies of death. It was no longer a capital offence to bear an aristocratic name, to be better dressed than the *sans-culottes*, to wear no Jacobin-cap, and to be related to the emigrants. The guillotine, which had ruled over Paris during two years of blood and tears, now rested from its horrid work, and allowed the Parisians to think of something else besides making their wills and preparing for death.

Mindful of the uncertainty of the times, the people were disposed to make the most of this release from the fear of immediate death, and to enjoy themselves to the utmost while they could.

They had so long wept, that they eagerly desired to laugh once more; so long lived in sorrow and fear, that they now ardently longed for amusement and relaxation. The beautiful women of Paris, who had been dethroned

by the guillotine, and from whose hands the reins had been torn, now found the courage to grasp these reins again, and reconquer the position from which the storm-wind of the revolution had hurled them.

Madame Tallien, the all-powerful wife of one of the five directors who now swayed the destinies of France; Madame Récamier, the friend of all the eminent and distinguished men of that period; and Madame de Staël, the daughter of Necker, and the wife of the ambassador of Sweden, whose government had recognized the republic—these three ladies gave to Paris its drawing-rooms, its reunions, its *fêtes*, its fashions, and its luxury. All Paris had assumed a new form, and, although the Church had not yet again obtained official recognition, the belief in a Supreme Being was already re-established. Robespierre had already been bold enough to cause the inscription, "There is a Supreme Being," to be placed over the altars of the churches that had been converted into "Temples of Reason." Yes, there is a Supreme Being; and Robespierre, who had first acknowledged its existence, was soon to experience in himself that such was the case. Betrayed by his own associates, and charged by them with desiring to make himself dictator, and place himself at the head of the new Roman-French Republic as a new Cæsar, Robespierre fell a prey to the Tribunal of Terror which he himself had called into existence. While engaged in the Hôtel de Ville in signing death-sentences which were to furnish fresh victims to the guillotine, he was arrested by the Jacobins and Na-