

CHAPTER VI.

BONAPARTE IN ITALY.

JOSEPHINE, now the wife of General Bonaparte, had but a few weeks in which to enjoy her new happiness, and then remained alone in Paris, doubly desolate, because she had to be separated, not only from her husband, but from her children. Eugene accompanied his young step-father to Italy, and Hortense went as a pupil to Madame Campan's boarding-school. The former, lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie Antoinette, had, at that time, opened an establishment for the education of young ladies, at St. Germain, and the greatest and most eminent families of newly-republicanized France liked to send their daughters to it, so that they might learn from the former court-lady the refined style and manners of old royalist times.

Hortense was, therefore, sent to that boarding-school, and there, in the society of her new Aunt Caroline—the sister of Bonaparte, and afterward Queen of Naples—and the young Countess Stephanie Beauharnais, her cousin, passed a few happy years of work, of varied study, and of youthful maiden-dreams.

Hortense devoted herself with iron diligence, and untiring enthusiasm, to her studies, which consisted, not only in the acquisition of languages, in music, and drawing, history and geography, but still more in the mastering the so-called *bon ton* and that aristocratic *savoir vivre*

of which Madame Campan was a very model. While Hortense was thus receiving instruction on the harp from the celebrated Alvimara, in painting from Isabey, dancing from Coulon, and singing from Lambert, and was playing on the stage of the amateur theatre at the boarding-school the parts of heroines and lady-loves; while she was participating in the balls and concerts that Madame Campan gave, in order to show off the talent of her pupils to the friends she invited; while, in a word, Hortense was thus being trained up to the accomplishments of a distinguished woman of the world, she did not dream how useful all these little details, so trivial, apparently, at the time, would one day be to her, and how good a thing it was that she had learned to play parts at Madame Campan's, and to appear in society as a great lady.

Meanwhile, Josephine was passing days of gratified pride and exulting triumph at Paris, for the star of her hero was ascending, brighter and brighter in its effulgence, above the horizon; the name of Bonaparte was echoing in louder and louder volume through the world, and filling all Europe with a sort of awe-inspired fear and trembling, as the sea becomes agitated when the sun begins to rise. Victory after victory came joyfully heralded from Italy, as ancient states fell beneath the iron tread of the victor, and new ones sprang into being. The splendid old Republic of Venice, once the terror of the whole world, the victorious Queen of the Adriatic, had to bow her haughty head, and her diadem fell in fragments at the feet of her triumphant conqueror. The lion of

St. Mark's no longer made mankind tremble at his angry roar, and the slender monumental pillars on the Piazzetta were all that remained to the shattered and fallen Venetian Republic of her conquests in Candia, Cyprus, and the Morea. But, from the dust and ashes of the old commonwealth, there arose, at Bonaparte's command, a new state, the Cisalpine Republic, as a new and youthful daughter of the French Republic; and, when the last Doge of Venice, Luigi Manin, laid his peaked crown at the feet of Bonaparte, and then fainted away, another Venetian, Dandolo, the son of a family that had given Venice the greatest and most celebrated of her doges, stepped to the front at the head of the new republic—that Dandolo of whom Bonaparte had said that he was “a man.”

“Good God!” exclaimed Bonaparte one day to Bourrienne, “how seldom one meets *men* in the world! In Italy there are eighteen millions of inhabitants, but I have found only two *men* among them all—Dandolo and Melzi.”*

But, while Bonaparte was despairing of *men*, in the very midst of his victories, he cherished the warmest, most impassioned love for his wife, to whom he almost daily wrote the tenderest and most ardent letters, the answers to which he awaited with the most impatient longing.

Josephine's letters formed the sole exception to a very unusual and singular system that Bonaparte had adopted

* Bourrienne, vol. i, p. 139.

during a part of his campaign in Italy. This was to leave all written communications, excepting such as came to him by special couriers, unread for three weeks. He threw them all into a large basket, and opened them only on the twenty-first day thereafter. Still, General Bonaparte was more considerate than Cardinal Dubois, who immediately consigned *all* the communications he received to the flames, *unread*, and—while the fire on his hearth was consuming the paper on which, perchance, was written the despairing appeal of a mother, imploring pardon for her son; of a disconsolate wife, beseeching pity for her husband; or the application of an ambitious statesman, desiring promotion—would point to them with a sardonic smile, and say, “There's *my* correspondence!” Bonaparte, at least, gave the letters a perusal, three weeks after they reached him, indeed; but those three weeks saved him and his secretary, Bourrienne, much time and labor, for, when they finally went to work on them, time and circumstances had already disposed of four fifths of them, and thus only one fifth required answers—a result that made Bonaparte laugh heartily, and filled him with justifiable pride in what he termed his “happy idea.”

Josephine's letters, however, had not an hour or a minute to wait ere they were read. Bonaparte always received them with his heart bounding with delight, and invariably answered them, in such impassioned, glowing language as only his warm southern temperament could suggest, and contrasted with which even Josephine's missives seemed a little cool and passionless.

Ere long Bonaparte ceased to be satisfied with merely getting letters from his Josephine. He desired to have her, in person, with him ; and hardly had the tempest of war begun to lull, ere the general summoned his beloved to his side at Milan. She obeyed his call with rapture, and hastened to Italy to join him. Now came proud days of triumph and gratified affection. All Italy hailed Bonaparte as the conquering hero ; all Italy did homage to the woman who bore his name, and whose incomparable fascination and amiability, gracefulness and beauty, won all hearts. Her life now resembled a magnificent, glorified, triumphal pageant ; a dazzling fairy festival ; a tale from the "Arabian Nights" that had become reality, with Josephine for its enchanted heroine, sparkling with stars, and gleaming with golden sunshine.

CHAPTER VII.

VICISSITUDES OF DESTINY.

RESPLENDENT was the triumphal procession with which Bonaparte made his proud entry into Paris, on his return from Italy. In the front court-yard of the Luxembourg, the palace occupied by the *Corps Législatif*, was erected a vast amphitheatre, in which sat all the high authorities of France ; in the centre of the amphitheatre stood the altar of the country, surmounted by three gigantic statues, representing Freedom, Equality, and Peace.

As Bonaparte stepped into this space, all the dense crowd that occupied the seats of the amphitheatre rose to their feet, with uncovered heads, to hail the conqueror of Italy, and the windows of the palace were thronged with handsomely dressed ladies, who waved welcome to the young hero with their handkerchiefs. But suddenly this splendid festival was marred by a serious mischance. An officer of the Directory, who, the better to satisfy his curiosity, had clambered up on the scaffolding of the right-side wing of the palace, then undergoing extension, fell from it, and struck the ground almost at Napoleon's feet. A shout of terror burst almost simultaneously from a thousand throats, and the ladies turned pale and shrank back, shuddering, from the windows. The palace, which a moment before had exhibited such a wealth of adornment in these living flowers, now stood there bare, with empty, gaping casements. A perceptible thrill ran through the ranks of the *Corps Législatif*, and here and there the whisper passed that this fall of an officer portended the early overthrow of the Directory itself, and that it, too, would soon, like the unfortunate victim of the accident, be lying in its death agonies at the feet of General Bonaparte.

But the Directory, nevertheless, hastened to give the victor of Arcola new *fêtes* every day ; and when these *fêtes* were over, and Bonaparte, fatigued with the speeches, the festivities, the toasts, etc., would be on his way returning homeward, there was the populace of Paris, who beset his path in crowds, to greet him with hearty cheers ;