

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 ;

and these persistent friends he had to recognize, with smiles and shakings of the hand, or with a nod and a pleasant glance.

A universal jubilee of delight had seized upon the French. Each individual saw in Bonaparte renown and greatness reflected on himself. Every one regarded him as the most brilliant impersonation of his own inner personality, and, therefore, felt drawn toward him with a sort of reverential exultation.

Josephine gave herself up with her whole soul to the enjoyment of these glorious occasions. While Bonaparte, almost completely overwhelmed and disturbed, could have held aloof from these ovations of the people of Paris, they, on the contrary, filled the heart of his wife with pride and joy. While in the theatre, he shrank back, abashed, behind his wife's chair when the audience, learning his presence, filled their noisy plaudits and clamored to have a glimpse at him, Josephine would thank the crowd on his behalf with a bewitching smile, and eyes swelling with tears for this proof of their regard, which to her seemed but a natural and appropriate tribute to her Achilles, her lion-hearted hero. But Bonaparte did not allow himself to be blinded by these demonstrations; and one day, when popular enthusiasm seemed as though it would never end, and the crowd were untiring in their cries of "*Vive Bonaparte!*" while Josephine turned her face toward him, glowing with delight, and called out, exultingly—"See, how they love you, these good people of Paris!" he replied, with an almost melancholy expres-

sion, "Bah! the crowd would be just as numerous and noisy if they were conducting me to the scaffold!"

However, these festivals and demonstrations at length subsided, and his life resumed its more tranquil course.

Bonaparte could now once more spend a few secluded days of rest and calm enjoyment in his (by this time more richly-decorated) dwelling in the Rue Chauteraine, the name of which the city authorities had changed to *Rue de la Victoire*, in honor of the conqueror at Arcola and Marengo. He could, after so many battles and triumphs, afford to repose a while in the arms of love and happiness.

Nevertheless, this inactivity soon began to press heavily on his restless spirit. He longed for new exploits, for fresh victories. He felt that he was only at the commencement, and not at the end of his conquering career; he constantly heard ringing in his ears the notes of the battle-clarion, summoning him to renewed triumphs and to other paths of glory. Love could only delight his heart, but could not completely satisfy it. Repose he deemed but the beginning of death.

"If I remain here inactive any longer, I am lost," said he. "They retain the resemblance of nothing whatever in Paris; one celebrity blots out another in this great Babylon; if I show myself much oftener to the public, they will cease to look at me, and if I do not soon undertake something new, they will forget me."

And he did undertake something new, something unprecedented, that filled all Europe with astonishment.

He left the shores of France with an army to conquer, for the French Republic, that ancient land of Egypt, on whose pyramids the green moss of long-forgotten ages was flourishing.

Josephine did not accompany him. She remained behind in Paris; but she needed consolation and encouragement to enable her to sustain this separation, which Bonaparte himself had confessed to her might be just as likely to last six years as six months. And what could afford better consolation to a heart so tender as Josephine's than the presence of her beloved daughter? She had willingly given up her son to her husband, and he had accompanied the latter to Egypt, but her daughter remained, and her she would not give up to any one, not even to Madame Campan's boarding-school.

Besides, the education of Hortense was now completed. She who had come to St. Germain as a child, left the boarding-school, after two years' stay, a handsome, blooming young lady, adorned with all the charms of innocence, youth, grace, and refinement.

Although she was now a young lady of nearly sixteen, she had retained the thoughts and ways of her childhood. Her heart was as a white sheet of paper, on which no profane hand had ventured to write a mortal name. She loved nothing beyond her mother, her brother, the fine arts, and flowers. She entertained a profound but speechless veneration for her young step-father. His burning gaze made her uneasy and timorous; his commanding voice made her heart throb anxiously; in fine, she rever-

enced him with adoring but too agitated an impression of awe to find it possible to love him. He was for her at all times the hero, the lord and master, the father to whom she owed implicit obedience, but she dared not love him; she could only look up to and honor him from a distance.

Hortense loved nothing but her mother, her brother, the fine arts, and flowers. She still looked out, with the expectant eyes of a child, upon the world which seemed so beautiful and inviting to her, and from which she hoped yet to obtain some grand dazzling piece of good fortune without having any accurate idea in what it was to consist. She still loved all mankind, and believed in their truth and rectitude. No thorn had yet wounded her heart; no disenchantment, no bright illusion dashed to pieces, had yet left its shadow on that clear, lofty brow of transparent whiteness. The expression of her large blue eyes was still radiant and undimmed, and her laugh was so clear and ringing, that it almost made her mother sad to hear it, for it sounded to her like the last echo of some sweet, enchanting song of childhood, and she but too well knew that it would soon be hushed.

But Hortense still laughed, still sang with the birds, rivalling their melodies; the world still lay before her like an early morning dream, and she still hoped for the rising of the sun.

Such was Hortense when her mother took her from Madame Campan's boarding-school, to accompany her to the baths of Plombières. But there it was that Hortense

came near experiencing the greatest sorrow of her life, in nearly losing her mother.

She was with Josephine and some other ladies in the drawing-room of the house they occupied at Plombières. The doors facing the balcony were open, to let in the warm summer air. Hortense was sitting by the window, painting a nosegay of wild flowers, that she had gathered with her own hands on the hills of Plombières. Josephine found the atmosphere of the room too close, and invited some ladies to step out with her upon the balcony. A moment afterward there was heard a deafening crash, followed by piercing shrieks of terror; and when Hortense sprang in desperate fright to the front entrance, she found that the balcony on which her mother and the other ladies had stood had disappeared. Its fastenings had given way, and they had been precipitated with it into the street. Hortense, in the first impulse of her distress and horror, would have sprung down after her beloved mother, and could only be held back with the greatest difficulty. But this time fate had spared the young girl, and refrained from darkening the pure, unclouded heaven of her youth. Her mother escaped with no other injury than the fright, and a slight wound on her arm, while one of the ladies had both legs broken.

Josephine's time to die had not yet come, for the prophecy of the fortune-teller had not yet been fulfilled. Josephine was, indeed, the wife of a renowned general, but she was not yet "something more than a queen."

CHAPTER VIII.

BONAPARTE'S RETURN FROM EGYPT.

BONAPARTE had got back from Egypt. His victory at Aboukir had adorned his brows with fresh laurels, and all France hailed the returning conqueror with plaudits of exulting pride. For the first time, Hortense was present at the festivities which the city of Paris dedicated to her step-father; for the first time she saw the homage that men and women, graybeards and children alike, paid to the hero of Italy and Egypt. These festivities and this homage filled her heart with a tremor of alarm, and yet, at the same time, with joyous exultation. In the midst of these triumphs and these ovations which were thus offered to her second father, the young girl recalled the prison in which her mother had once languished, the scaffold upon which the head of her own father had fallen; and frequently when she glanced at the rich gold-embroidered uniform of her brother, she reminded him with a roguish smile of the time when Eugene went in a blue blouse, as a carpenter's apprentice, through the streets of Paris with a long plank on his shoulder.

These recollections of the first terrible days of her youth kept Hortense from feeling the pride and arrogance of good fortune, preserved to her her modest, unassuming tone of mind, prevented her from entertaining any overweening or domineering propensity in her day of prosperity, or from seeming cast down and hopeless