

BOOK II.
THE QUEEN OF HOLLAND.

CHAPTER I.

A FIRST LOVE.

WITH the entry of Bonaparte into the Tuileries, the revolution closed, and blissful days of tranquillity and gay festivity followed. Josephine and Hortense were the cynosure of all these festivals, for they were, likewise, the animating centre whence the grace and beauty, the attractive charm, and the intellectual significance of them all, proceeded.

Hortense was passionately fond of dancing, and no one at "the court of Josephine" tripped it with such gracefulness and such enchanting delicacy as she. Now, as the reader will observe, people already began to speak of the "court" of Madame Bonaparte, the powerful wife of the First Consul of France. Now, also, *audiences* were held, and Josephine and Hortense already had a court retinue who approached them with the same subserviency and humility as though they had been princesses of the blood.

Madame Bonaparte now rode with her daughter through the streets of Paris in a richly-gilded coach, under a military escort, and wherever the populace caught a glimpse of them they greeted the wife and daughter of the first consul with applauding shouts.

Bonaparte's coachmen and servants had now a livery, and made their appearance in green coats with gold embroidery and galloons. There were chamberlains and lackeys, grooms and outriders; splendid dinners and evening parties were given, and the ambassadors of foreign powers were received in solemn audience; for, now, all the European states had recognized the French Republic under the consulate, and, as Bonaparte had concluded peace with England and Austria, these two great powers also sent envoys to the court of the mighty consul.

Instead of warlike struggles, the Tuileries now witnessed contentions of the toilet, and *powder or no powder* was one of the great questions of etiquette in which Josephine gave the casting vote when she said that "every one should dress as seemed best and most becoming to each, but yet endeavor to let good taste pervade the selection."

For some time, meanwhile, Hortense had participated with less zest than formerly in the amusements and parties of the day; for some time she had seemed to prefer being alone more than in previous years, and held herself aloof in the quiet retirement of her own apartments, where the melancholy, tender, and touching melodies

which she drew from her harp in those lonely hours seemed to hold her better converse than all the gay and flattering remarks that she was accustomed to hear in her mother's grand saloons.

Hortense sought solitude, for to solitude alone could she confide what was weighing on her heart; to it alone could she venture to confess that she was in love, and with all the innocent energy, all the warmth and absolute devotion of a first attachment. How blissful were those hours of reverie, of expectant peering into the future, which seemed to promise the rising of another sun of happiness to her beaming gaze! For this young girl's passion had the secret approbation of her mother and her step-father, and both of them smilingly pretended not to be, in the least degree, aware of the tender understanding that subsisted between Hortense and General Duroc, Bonaparte's chief adjutant; only that, while Josephine took it to be the first tender fluttering of a young girl's heart awaking to the world, Bonaparte ascribed a more serious meaning to it, and bestowed earnest thought upon the idea of a union between Hortense and his friend. He was anxious, above all other things, to give Duroc a more important and imposing status, and therefore sent him as ambassador to St. Petersburg, to convey to the Emperor Alexander, who had just ascended his father's throne, the congratulations and good wishes of the First Consul of France.

The poor young lovers, constantly watched as they were, and as constantly restrained by the rules of an eti-

quette which was now becoming more and more rigid, had not the consolation accorded to them of exchanging even one last unnoticed pressure of the hand, one last tender vow of eternal fidelity, when they took leave of each other. But they hoped in the future, and looked forward to Duroc's return, and to the precious recompense that Bonaparte had significantly promised to his friend. That recompense was the hand of Hortense. Until then, they had to content themselves with that sole and sweetest solace of all parted lovers, the letters that they interchanged, and which Bourrienne, Bonaparte's secretary, faithfully and discreetly transmitted.

"Nearly every evening," relates Bourrienne, in his *Mémoires*, "I played a game of billiards with Mademoiselle Hortense, who was an adept at it. When I said, in a low tone to her, 'I have a letter,' the game would cease at once, and she would hasten to her room, whither I followed her, and took the letter to her. Her eyes would instantly fill with tears of emotion and delight, and it was only after a long lapse of time that she would go down to the saloon whither I had preceded her." *

Hortense, thus busied only with her young lover and her innocent dreams of the future, troubled herself but little concerning what was taking place around her, and did not perceive that others were ready to make her young heart the plaything of domestic and political intrigue.

Bonaparte's brothers, who were jealous of the sway

* Bourrienne, vol. iv., p. 319.

that the beautiful and fascinating Josephine still exerted over the first consul, as in the first days of their wedded life, were anxious, by separating Hortense from her mother, to deprive Josephine of one of the strongest supports of her influence, and thus, by isolating Josephine, bring themselves nearer to their brother. They well knew the affection which Bonaparte, who was particularly fond of children, entertained for those of his wife, and they also knew that Eugene and Hortense had, one day, not by their entreaties or their tears, but by their mere presence, prevented Josephine and Bonaparte from separating.

This was at the time when the whisperings of his brothers and of Junot had succeeded in making Bonaparte jealous on his return from Egypt.

At that time, Bonaparte had resolved to separate from a woman, against whom, however, his anger was thus fiercely aroused, simply because he was so strongly attached to her; and when Bourrienne implored him, at least, to hear Josephine before condemning her, and to see whether she could not clear herself, or he could not forgive her, he had replied:

“I forgive her? Never! Were I not sure of myself this time, I would tear my heart out and throw it into the fire!” And, as Bonaparte spoke, his voice trembling the while with rage, he clutched his breast with his hand as though he would indeed rend it to pieces. This scene occurred in the evening, but, when Bourrienne came into the office next morning, Bonaparte

stepped forward to meet him with a smile on his face, and a little confused.

“Now, Bourrienne,” said he, “you will be content—she is here! Don’t suppose that I have forgiven her—no, not at all! No, I reproached her vehemently, and sent her away. But, what would you have?—when she left me, weeping, I went after her, and, as she descended the stairs with her head drooping, I saw Eugene and Hortense, who went with her, sobbing violently. I have not the heart to look unmoved on any one in tears. Eugene had accompanied me to Egypt, and I have accustomed myself to regard him as my adopted son; he is so gallant, so excellent a young man. Hortense is just coming out into the world of society, and every one who knows her speaks well of her. I confess, Bourrienne, that the sight of her moved me deeply, and the sobbing of those two poor children made me sad as well. I said to myself, ‘Shall they be the victims of their mother’s fault?’ I called Eugene back. Hortense turned round and, along with Josephine, followed her brother. I saw the movement, and said nothing. What could I do? One cannot be a mortal man without having his hours of weakness!”

“Be assured, general,” exclaimed Bourrienne, “that your adopted children will reward you for it!”

“They must do so, Bourrienne—they must do so; for it is a great sacrifice that I have made for them!”*

This sacrifice, however, had its recompense imme-

* Bourrienne, vol. iv., p. 119.

diately, for Josephine had been able to set herself right, and Bonaparte had joyfully become convinced that the accusations of his jealous brothers had been unjust.

Hence it was that Bonaparte's brothers wished to remove Hortense, since they knew that she was her mother's main stay; that she, with her gentle, amiable disposition, her tact and good sense, her penetrating and never-failing sagacity, stood like a wise young Mentor at the side of her beautiful, attractive, impulsive, somewhat vain, and very extravagant mother.

It would be easier to set Josephine aside were Hortense first removed; and Josephine they wanted to get out of the way because she interfered with the ambitious designs of Bonaparte's brothers. Since they could not become great and celebrated by their own merits, they desired to be so through their illustrious brother; and, in order that they might become kings, Bonaparte must, above all things, wear a crown. Josephine was opposed to this project; she loved Bonaparte enough to fear the dangers that a usurpation of the crown must bring with it, and she had so little ambition as to prefer her present brilliant and peaceful lot to the proud but perilous exaltation to a throne.

For this reason, then, Josephine was to be removed, and Bonaparte must choose another wife—a wife in whose veins there should course legitimate royal blood, and who would, therefore, be content to see a crown upon the head of her consort.

CHAPTER II.

LOUIS BONAPARTE AND DUROC.

THE brothers of Bonaparte went diligently to work then, above all things, to get Hortense out of the way. They told Bonaparte of the burning love of the young couple, of the letters which they sent to each other, and proposed to him that Duroc should be transferred to the Italian army with a higher command, and that Hortense should then be given to him. They persuaded the unsuspecting, magnanimous hero, who was easy to deceive in these minor matters and thus easy because he was occupied with grand designs and grand things; they persuaded him to keep the proposed union a secret for the present, and then on Duroc's early return to surprise the young couple and Josephine alike.

But Josephine had, this time, seen through the plans of her hostile brothers-in-law. She felt that her whole existence, her entire future, was imperilled, should she not succeed in making friends and allies in the family of Bonaparte itself. There was only one of Bonaparte's brothers who was not hostile to her, but loved her as the wife of his brother, to whom he was, at that time, still devoted with the most enthusiastic and submissive tenderness.

This one was Bonaparte's brother Louis, a young man of serious and sedate disposition, more of a scholar than a warrior, more a man of science than fit for the council-