

this queen felt themselves so poor and miserable, that they looked back with envy at the days of the revolution—the days in which they had led in retirement a life of poverty and want. Then, though struggling with want and care, they had been rich in hopes, in wishes, in illusions; now, they possessed all that could adorn life; now millions of men bowed down to them, and saluted them with the proud word “majesty,” and yet empress and queen were now poor in hopes and wishes, poor in the illusions that lay shattered at their feet, and rejoicing only in the one happiness, that of being able to confide their misery to each other.

A few days after her arrival, the emperor caused Hortense to be called to his cabinet. He advanced toward her with vivacity, but before the gaze of her large eyes the glance of the man before whom the whole world now bowed, almost quailed.

“Hortense,” said he, “we are now called on to decide an important matter, and it is our duty not to recoil. The nation has done so much for me and my family, that I owe them the sacrifice which they demand of me. The tranquillity and welfare of France require that I shall choose a wife who can give the country an heir to the throne. Josephine has been living in suspense and anguish for six months, and this must end. You, Hortense, are her dearest friend and her confidante; she loves you more than all else in the world. Will you undertake to prepare your mother for this step? You would thereby relieve my heart of a heavy burden.”

Hortense had the strength to suppress her tears, and fasten her eyes on the emperor's countenance in a firm, determined gaze. His glance again quailed, as the lion recoils from the angry glance of a pure, innocent woman. Hortense had the courage to positively refuse the emperor's request.

“How, Hortense!” exclaimed Napoleon with emotion. “You then refuse my request?”

“Sire,” said she, hardly able longer to restrain her tears, “sire, I have not the strength to stab my mother to the heart.”\*

And regardless of etiquette, Hortense turned away and left the emperor's cabinet, the tears pouring in streams from her eyes.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DIVORCE.

NAPOLEON made one other attempt to impart to Josephine, through a third person, the distressing tidings of his determination with regard to herself. He begged Eugene, the Viceroy of Italy, to come to Paris, and on his arrival informed him of his intentions and of his wish. Eugene, like his sister, received this intelligence in silent submissiveness, but like his sister, he refused to impart to his mother, tidings that must destroy her happiness forever.

\* Schelten, vol. ii., p. 45.



The emperor had finally to make up his mind to impart the distressing tidings in person.

It was on the 30th of November, 1809. The emperor and empress dined, as usual, at the same table. His gloomy aspect on entering the room made Josephine's heart quake; she read in his countenance that the fatal hour had come. But she repressed the tears which were rushing to her eyes, and looked entreatingly at her daughter, who sat on the opposite side of the table, a deathly pallor on her countenance.

Not a word was spoken during this gloomy, ominous dinner. The sighs and half-suppressed moaning that escaped Josephine's heaving breast were quite audible. Without, the wind shrieked and howled dismally, and drove the rain violently against the window-panes; within, an ominous, oppressive silence prevailed. The commotion of Nature contrasted, and yet, at the same time, harmonized strangely with this human silence. Napoleon broke this silence but once, and that was when, in a harsh voice, he asked the lackey, who stood behind him, what time it was. Then all was still as before.

At last Napoleon gave the signal to rise from the table, and coffee was then taken standing. Napoleon drank hastily, and then set the cup down with a trembling hand, making it ring out as it touched the table. With an angry gesture he dismissed the attendants.

"Sire, may Hortense remain?" asked Josephine, almost inaudibly.

"No!" exclaimed the emperor, vehemently. Hor-

tense made a profound obeisance, and, taking leave of her mother with a look of tender compassion, left the room, followed by the rest.

The imperial pair were now alone. And how horrible was this being left alone under the circumstances; how sad the silence in which they sat opposite each other! How strange the glance which the emperor fastened on his wife!

She read in his excited, quivering features the struggle that moved his soul, but she also read in them that her hour was come!

As he now approached her, his outstretched hand trembled, and Josephine shudderingly recoiled.

Napoleon took her hand in his, and laid it on his heart, regarding her with a long and sorrowful farewell-glance.

"Josephine," said he, his voice trembling with emotion, "my good Josephine, you know that I have loved you! To you, and to you alone, do I owe the only moments of happiness I have enjoyed in this world. Josephine, my destiny is stronger than my will. My dearest desires must yield to the interests of France."\*

"Speak no further," cried Josephine, withdrawing her hand angrily—"no, speak no further. I understand you, and I expected this, but the blow is not the less deadly."

She could speak no further, her voice failed. A feeling of despair came over her; the long-repressed storm

\* The emperor's own words. See Bourrienne, vol. iii., p. 344.



of agony at last broke forth. She wept, she wrung her hands; groans escaped her heaving breast, and a loud cry of anguish burst from her lips. She at last fainted away, and was thus relieved from a consciousness of her sufferings.

When she awoke she found herself on her bed, and Hortense and her physician Corvisart at her side. Josephine stretched out her trembling arms toward her daughter, who threw herself on her mother's heart, sobbing bitterly. Corvisart silently withdrew, feeling that he could be of no further assistance. It had only been in his power to recall Josephine to a consciousness of her misery; but for her misery itself he had no medicine; he knew that her tears and her daughter's sympathy could alone give relief.

Josephine lay weeping in her daughter's arms, when Napoleon came in to inquire after her condition. As he seated himself at her bedside, she shrank back with a feeling of horror, her tears ceased to flow, and her usually so mild and joyous eyes now shot glances of anger and offended love at the emperor. But love soon conquered anger. She extended her tremulous hand to Napoleon; the sad, sweet smile, peculiar to woman, trembled on her lips, and, in a gentle, touching voice, she said: "Was I not right, my friend, when I shrank back in terror from the thought of becoming an empress?" \*

Napoleon made no reply. He turned away and

\* Josephine's own narrative. See Bourrienne, vol. iii., p. 342, *et seq.*

wept. But these farewell tears of his love could not change Josephine's fate; the emperor had already determined it irrevocably. His demand of the hand of the Archduchess Marie Louise had already been acceded to in Vienna. Nothing now remained to be done but to remove Josephine from the throne, and elevate a new, a legitimate empress, to the vacant place!

The emperor could not and would not retrace his steps. He assembled about him all his brothers, all the kings, dukes, and princes, created by his mighty will, and in the state-chambers of the Tuileries, in the presence of his court and the Senate, the emperor appeared; at his side the empress, arrayed for the last time in all the insignia of the dignity she was about to lay aside forever.

In a loud, firm voice the emperor declared to the assembly his determination to divorce himself from his wife; and Josephine, in a trembling voice, often interrupted by tears, repeated her husband's words. The arch-chancellor, Cambacérès, then caused the appropriate paragraph of the *Code Civile* to be read, applied it to the case under consideration, in a short, terse address, and pronounced the union of the emperor and empress dissolved.

This ended the ceremony, and satisfied the requirements of the law. Josephine had now only to take leave of her husband and of the court, and she did this with the gentle, angelic composure, in the graceful, sweet manner, which was hers in a degree possessed by few other women.



As she bowed profoundly to Napoleon, her pale face illumined by inward emotion, his lips murmured a few inaudible words, and his iron countenance quivered for an instant with pain. As she then walked through the chamber, her children, Hortense and Eugene, on either side, and greeted all with a last soft look, a last inclination of the head, nothing could be heard but weeping, and even those who rejoiced over her downfall, because they hoped much from the new empress and the new dynasty, were now moved to tears by this silent and yet so eloquent leave-taking.

The sacrifice was accomplished. Napoleon had sacrificed his dearest possession to ambition; he had divorced himself from Josephine.

On the same day she left the Tuileries to repair to Malmaison, her future home—to Malmaison, that had once been the paradise, and was now to be the widow's seat, of her love.

Josephine left the court, but the hearts of those who constituted this court did not leave her. During the next few weeks the crowds of the coming and going on the road from Paris to Malmaison presented the appearance of a procession; the equipages of all the kings and princes who were sojourning in Paris, and of all the nobles and dignitaries of the new France, were to be seen there. Even the Faubourg St.-Germain, that still preserved its sympathy for the Bourbons, repaired to the empress at Malmaison. And this pilgrimage was made by the poor and humble, as well as by the rich and great.

All wished to say to the empress that they still loved and honored her, and that she was still enthroned in their hearts, although her rule on the throne was at an end.

The whole people mourned with Josephine and her children. It was whispered about that Napoleon's star would now grow pale; that, with Josephine, his good angel had left him, and that the future would avenge her tears.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE KING OF HOLLAND.

WHILE Josephine was weeping over her divorce at Malmaison, Hortense was seeking one for herself. A divorce which her mother lamented as a misfortune, because she still loved her husband, would have conferred happiness upon Hortense, who never had loved her husband. Once again in harmony with her husband, Hortense entreated the emperor to permit them to be divorced, and the king united his entreaties with those of the queen.

But Napoleon was unrelenting. His family should not appear before the people as disregarding the sanctity of the marriage bond. For state reasons he had separated from his wife, and for state reasons he could not give his consent to the dissolution of the union of his brother and step-daughter. They must, therefore, continue to drag