

And this is why they are so astounded, and remain so helpless, when the hand of misfortune does strike them. I wish to preserve my sons from this." *

She then stooped and kissed her boys, who, while she and her brilliant suite were driving to the Tuileries, busied their little heads, considering whether it was easier to earn one's bread as a soldier, or by selling violets at the gates of the Tuileries, like the little beggar-boy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DAYS OF MISFORTUNE.

THE round of festivities with which the people of France endeavored to banish the shadow of impending misfortune, was soon to be abruptly terminated. The thunder of the cannon on the battle-fields of Hanau and Leipsic silenced the dancing-music in the Tuileries; and in the drawing-rooms of Queen Hortense, hitherto devoted to music and literature, the ladies were now busily engaged in picking lint for the wounded who were daily arriving at the hospitals of Paris from the army. The declaration of war of Austria and Russia had aroused France from its haughty sense of invincibility. All felt that a crisis was at hand. All were preparing for the ominous events that were gathering like storm-clouds over France. Each of the faithful hastened to assume

* The queen's own words.

the position to which honor and duty called him. And it was in response to such an appeal that Louis Bonaparte now returned from Grätz to Paris; he had heard the ominous tones of the voice that threatened the emperor, and wished to be at his side in the hour of danger.

It was not as the wife, but in the spirit of a Frenchwoman and a queen, that Hortense received the intelligence of her husband's return. "I am delighted to hear it," said she; "my husband is a good Frenchman, and he proves it by returning at the moment when all Europe has declared against France. He is a man of honor, and if our characters could not be made to harmonize, it was probably because we both had defects that were irreconcilable.

"I," added she, with a gentle smile, "I was too proud, I had been spoiled, and was probably too deeply impressed with a sense of my own worth; and this defect is not conducive to pleasant relations with one who is distrustful and low-spirited. But our interests were always the same, and his hastening to France, to enroll himself with all his brother Frenchmen, for the defence of his country, is worthy of the king's character. It is only by doing thus that we can testify our gratitude for the benefits the people have conferred upon our family." *

In the first days of January, 1814, the news that the enemy had crossed the boundaries of France, and that the Austrians, Russians, and Prussians, were marching on Paris, created a panic throughout the entire city. For

* Cochelet, Mémoires sur la reine Hortense, vol. i., p. 167.

the first time, after so many years of triumph, France trembled for its proud army, and believed in the possibility of defeat.

In the Tuileries, also, gloom and dejection ruled the hour for the first time; and while, when the army had heretofore gone forth, the question had been, "When shall we receive the first intelligence of victory?" there were now only mute, inquiring glances bent on the emperor's clouded countenance.

On the 24th of January, Napoleon left Paris, in order to repair to the army. The empress, whom he had made regent, giving her a council, consisting of his brothers and the ministers, as a support—the empress had taken leave of him in a flood of tears, and Queen Hortense, who had alone been present on this occasion, had been compelled to remain for some time with the empress, in order to console and encourage her.

But Hortense was far from feeling the confidence which she exhibited in the presence of the empress and of her own court. She had never believed in the duration of these triumphs and of this fortune; she had always awaited the coming evil in silent expectation, and she was therefore now ready to face it bravely, and to defend herself and her children against its attacks. She therefore was calm and self-possessed, while the entire imperial family was terror-stricken, while all Paris was in a panic, while the fearful intelligence, "The Cossacks are coming, the Cossacks are marching on Paris!" was overrunning the city. "The Grand-duke Constan-

tine has promised his troops that they shall warm themselves at the burning ruins of Paris, and the Emperor Alexander has sworn that he will sleep in the Tuileries."

Nothing was now dreamed of but plundering, murder, and rapine; people trembled not only for their lives, but also for their property, and hastened to bury their treasures, their jewelry, their gold and silver, to secure it from the rapacious hands of the terrible Cossacks. Treasures were buried in cellars, or hid away in the walls of houses. The Duchess de Bassano caused all her valuable effects to be put in a hidden recess, and the entrance to the same to be walled up and covered with paper. There were among these valuable effects several large clocks, in golden cases, that were richly studded with precious stones, but it had unfortunately been forgotten to stop them, so that for the next week they continued to strike the hours regularly, and thereby betrayed to the neighbors the secret the duchess had so anxiously endeavored to conceal.

But the cry, "The Cossacks are coming!" was not the only alarm-cry of the Parisians. Another, and a long-silent cry, was now heard in Paris—a strange cry, that had no music for the ear of the imperialist, but one that, to the royalist, had a sweet and familiar sound. This cry was, "The Count de Lille!" or, as the royalists said, "King Louis XVIII." The royalists no longer whispered this name, but proclaimed it loudly and with enthusiasm, and even those of them who had attached themselves to the imperial court, and played a part at

the same, now dared to remove their masks a little, and show their true countenance.

Madame Ducayla, one of the most zealous royalists, although attached to the court society of the Tuileries, had gone to Hartwell, to convey to him messages of love and respect in the name of all the royalists of Paris, and to tell him that they had now begun to smooth the way for his return to France and the throne of his ancestors. She had returned with authority to organize the conspiracy of the royalists, and to give them the king's sanction. Talleyrand, the minister of Napoleon, the glittering weathercock in politics, had already experienced a change in disposition, in consequence of the shifting political wind, and when Countess Ducayla, provided with secret instructions for Talleyrand from Louis XVIII., entered his cabinet and said in a loud voice, "I come from Hartwell, I have seen the king, and he has instructed me—" he interrupted her in loud and angry tones, exclaiming: "Are you mad, madame? You dare to confess such a crime to me?" He had, however, then added in a low voice: "You have seen him, then? Well, I am his most devoted servant."*

The royalists held meetings and formed conspiracies with but little attempt at concealment, and the minister of police, Fouché, whose eyes and ears were always on the alert, and who knew of everything that occurred in Paris, also knew of these conspiracies of the royalists; he did not prevent them, however, but advised caution,

* Mémoires d'une femme de qualité, vol. i., p. 133.

endeavoring to prove to them thereby the deep reverence which he himself experienced for the unfortunate royal family.

In the midst of all this confusion and anxiety, Queen Hortense alone preserved her composure and courage, and far from endeavoring, like others, to conceal and secure her treasures, jewelry, and other valuables, she determined to make no change or reduction whatever in her manner of living; she wished to show the Parisians that the confidence of the imperial family in the emperor and his invincibility was not to be shaken. She therefore continued to conduct her household in truly royal style, although she had received from the exhausted state treasury no payment of the appanage set apart for herself and children for a period of three months. But she thought little of this; her generous heart was occupied with entirely different interests than those of her own pecuniary affairs.

She wished to inspire Marie Louise, whom the emperor had constituted empress-regent on his departure for the army, with the courage which she herself possessed. She conjured her to show herself worthy of the confidence the emperor had reposed in her at this critical time, and to adopt firm and energetic measures. When, on the 28th of March, the terror-inspiring news was circulated that the hostile armies were only five leagues from Paris, and while the people were flying from the city in troops, Hortense hastened to the Tuileries to conjure the empress to be firm, and not to leave Paris. She

entreated Marie Louise, in the name of the emperor, her husband, and the King of Rome, her son, not to heed the voice of the state council, who, after a long sitting, had unanimously declared that Paris could not be held, and that the empress, with her son and her council, should therefore leave the capital.

But Marie Louise had remained deaf to all these pressing and energetic representations, and the queen had not been able to inspire her young and weak sister-in law with her own resolution.

"My sister," Hortense had said to her, "you will at least understand that by leaving Paris now you paralyze its defence, and thereby endanger your crown, but I see that you are resigned to this sacrifice."

"It is true," Marie Louise had sadly replied. "I well know that I should act differently, but it is too late. The state council has decided, and I can do nothing!"

In sadness and dejection Hortense had then returned to her dwelling, where Lavalette, Madame Ney, and the ladies of her court, awaited her.

"All is lost," said she, sadly. "Yes, all is lost. The empress has determined to leave Paris. She lightly abandons France and the emperor. She is about to depart."

"If she does that," exclaimed General Lavalette, in despair, "then all is really lost, and yet her firmness and courage might now save the emperor, who is advancing toward Paris by forced marches. After all this weighing and deliberating, they have elected to take the worst course they could choose! But, as this has finally

been determined on, what course will your majesty now pursue?"

"I remain in Paris," said the queen, resolutely; "as I am permitted to be mistress of my own actions, I am resolved to remain here and share the fortunes of the Parisians, be they good or evil! This is at least a better and worthier course than to incur the risk of being made a prisoner on the public highway."

Now that she had come to a decision, the queen exhibited a joyous determination, and her mind recovered from its depression. She hastened to dispatch a courier to Malmaison to the Empress Josephine, now forgotten and neglected by all, to conjure her to leave for Novara at once. She then retired to her bedchamber to seek the rest she so much needed after so many hours of excitement.

But at midnight she was aroused from her repose to a sad awakening. Her husband, with whom she had held no kind of intercourse since his return, had now, in the hour of danger, determined to assert his marital authority over his wife and children. He wrote the queen a letter, requiring her to leave Paris with her children, and follow the empress.

Hortense replied with a decided refusal. A second categorical message from her husband was the response. He declared that if she should not at once conform to his will, and follow the empress with her children, he would immediately take his children into his own custody, by virtue of his authority as husband and father.

At this threat, the queen sprang up like an enraged lioness from her lair. With glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes she commanded that her children should be at once brought to her, and then, pressing her two boys to her heart with passionate tenderness, she exclaimed: "Tell the king that I shall leave the city within the hour!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ALLIES IN PARIS.

THE anxiety of motherly love had effected what neither the departure of the empress nor the news of the approach of the Cossacks could do. Hortense had taken her departure. She had quitted Paris, with her children and suite, which had already begun to grow sensibly smaller, and arrived, after a hurried flight, endangered by bands of marauding Cossacks, in Novara, where the Empress Josephine, with tears of sorrow and of joy alike, pressed her daughter to her heart. Although her own happiness and grandeur were gone, and although the misfortunes of the Emperor Napoleon—whom she still dearly loved—oppressed her heart, Josephine now had her daughter and dearest friend at her side, and that was a sweet consolation in the midst of all these misfortunes and cares.

At Novara, Hortense received the intelligence of the fall of the empire, of the capitulation of Paris, of the

entrance of the allies, and of the abdication of Napoleon.

When the courier sent by the Duke of Bassano with this intelligence further informed the Empress Josephine that the island of Elba had been assigned Napoleon as a domicile, and that he was on the point of leaving France to go into exile, Josephine fell, amid tears of anguish, into her daughter's arms, crying: "Hortense, he is unhappy, and I am not with him! He is banished to Elba! Alas! but for his wife, I would hasten to his side, to share his exile!"

While the empress was weeping and lamenting, Hortense had silently withdrawn to her apartments. She saw and fully appreciated the consequences that must ensue to the emperor's entire family, from his fall; she already felt the mortifications and insults to which the Bonapartes would now be exposed from all quarters, and she wished to withdraw herself and children from their influence. She formed a quick resolve, and determined to carry it out at once. She caused Mademoiselle de Cochelet, one of the few ladies of her court who had remained faithful, to be called, in order that she might impart to her her resolution.

"Louise," said she, "I intend to emigrate. I am alone and defenceless, and ever threatened by a misfortune that would be more cruel than the loss of crown and grandeur—the misfortune of seeing my children torn from me by my husband. My mother can remain in France—her divorce has made her free and independent: