

rising to terminate the long interview, that began to weary him. "What creditor of the state does not say the same of his debt? Moreover, I know too little of your relations toward my government. This matter does not concern me, and I will not be mixed up in it. If the laws are for you, all will go well without my interference; but if it requires influence, I shall have nothing to do with it, for I should be rather against than for you!"

"Sire," said young Staël, venturing to speak once more, as the emperor was on the point of leaving, "sire, my brother and I were anxious to settle in France; but how could we live in a land in which our mother would not be allowed to live with us everywhere?"

Already standing on the threshold of the door, the emperor turned to him hastily. "I have no desire whatever to have you settle here," said he; "on the contrary, I advise you not to do so. Go to England. There they have a *penchant* for Genevese, parlor-politicians, etc.; therefore, go to England; for I must say, I should be rather ill than well disposed toward you!" *

* Bourrienne, vol. viii., p. 355.

CHAPTER IV.

MADAME DE STAËL'S RETURN TO PARIS.

MADAME DE STAËL returned to her cherished France with the restoration. She came back thirsting for new honor and renown, and determined, above all, to have her work republished in Germany, its publication having been once suppressed by the imperial police. She entertained the pleasing hope that the new court would forget that she was Necker's daughter, receive her with open arms, and accord her the influence to which her active mind and genius entitled her.

But she was laboring under an error, by which she was not destined to be long deceived. She was received at court with the cold politeness which is more terrible than insult. The king, while speaking of her with his friends, called Madame de Staël "a Chateaubriand in petticoats." The Duchess d'Angoulême seemed never to see the celebrated poetess, and never addressed a word to her; the rest of the court met Madame de Staël armed to the teeth with all the hatred and prejudices of the olden time.

It was also in vain that Madame de Staël endeavored to act an important part at the new court; they refused to regard her as an authority or power, but treated her as a mere authoress; her counsel was ridiculed, and they dared even to question the renown of M. Necker.

"I am unfortunate," said Madame de Staël to Countess

Ducayla; "Napoleon hated me because he believed me to possess intellect; these people repel me because I at least possess ordinary human understanding! I can certainly get on very well without them; but, as my presence displeases them, I shall, at least, endeavor to get my money from them."

The "sacred debt" had not been paid under the empire, and it was now Madame de Staël's intention to obtain from the king what the emperor had refused.

She was well aware of the influence which Countess Ducayla exercised over Louis XVIII., and she now hastened to call on the beautiful countess—whose acquaintance she had made under peculiar circumstances, in a romantic love intrigue—in order to renew the friendship they had then vowed to each other.

The countess had not forgotten this friendship, and she was now grateful for the service Madame de Staël had then shown her. She helped to secure the liquidation of the sacred debt, and, upon the order of King Louis, the million was paid over to Madame de Staël. "But," says the countess, in her memoirs, "I believe the recovery of this million cost Madame de Staël four hundred thousand francs, besides a set of jewelry that was worth at least one hundred thousand."

The countess's purse and the jewelry case, however, doubtlessly bore evidence that she might as well have said "I know" as "I believe."

Besides the four hundred thousand francs and the jewelry, Madame de Staël also gave the countess a piece

of advice. "Make the most of the favor you now enjoy," said she to her; "but do so quickly, for, as matters are now conducted, I fear that the restoration will soon have to be restored."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the countess, smiling.

"I mean that, with the exception of the king, who perhaps does not say all he thinks, the others are still doing precisely as they always have done, and Heaven knows to what extremities their folly is destined to bring them! They mock at the old soldiers and assist the young priests, and this is the best means of ruining France."

Countess Ducayla considered this prediction of her intellectual friend as a mere cloud with which discontent and disappointed ambition had obscured the otherwise clear vision of Madame de Staël, and ridiculed the idea, little dreaming how soon her words were to be fulfilled.

Madame de Staël consoled herself for her cold reception at court, by receiving the best society of Paris in her parlors, and entertaining them with biting *bon mots* and witty *persiflage*, at the expense of the grand notabilities, who had suddenly arisen with their imposing genealogical trees out of the ruins and oblivion of the past.

Madame de Staël now also remembered the kindness Queen Hortense had shown her during her exile; and not to her only, but also to her friend, Madame Récamier, who had also been exiled by Napoleon, not, however, as his enemies said, "because she was Madame de

Staël's friend," but simply because she patronized and belonged to the so-called "little church." The "little church" was an organization born of the spirit of opposition of the Faubourg St. Germain, and a portion of the Catholic clergy, and was one of those things appertaining to the internal relations of France that were most annoying and disagreeable to the emperor.

Queen Hortense had espoused the cause of Madame de Staël and of Madame Récamier with generous warmth. She had eloquently interceded for the recall of both from their exile; and, now that the course of events had restored them to their home, both ladies came to the queen to thank her for her kindness and generosity.

Louise de Cochelet has described this visit of Madame de Staël so wittily, with so much *naïveté*, and with such peculiar local coloring, that we cannot refrain from laying a literal translation of the same before the reader.

CHAPTER V.

MADAME DE STAËL'S VISIT TO QUEEN HORTENSE.

LOUISE DE COCHELET relates as follows: "Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier had begged permission of the queen to visit her, for the purpose of tendering their thanks. The queen invited them to visit her at St. Leu, on the following day.

"She asked my advice as to which of the members of her social circle were best qualified to cope with Madame de Staël.

"I, for my part,' said the queen, 'have not the courage to take the lead in the conversation; one cannot be very intellectual when sad at heart, and I fear my dullness will infect the others.'

"We let quite a number of amiable persons pass before us in review, and I amused myself at the mention of each new name, by saying, 'He is too dull for Madame de Staël.'

"The queen laughed, and the list of those who were to be invited was at last agreed upon. We all awaited the arrival of the two ladies in great suspense. The obligation imposed on us by the queen, of being intellectual at all hazards, had the effect of conjuring up a somewhat embarrassed and stupid expression to our faces. We presented the appearance of actors on the stage looking at each other, while awaiting the rise of the curtain. Jests and *bon mots* followed each other in rapid succession until the arrival of the carriage recalled to our faces an expression of official earnestness.

"Madame Récamier, still young, and very handsome, and with an expression of *naïveté* in her charming countenance, made the impression on me of being a young lady in love, carefully watched over by too severe a *duenna*, her timid, gentle manner contrasted so strongly with the somewhat too masculine self-consciousness of her companion. Madame de Staël is, however, generally ad-