

## BOOK IV.

### *THE DUCHESS OF ST. LEU.*

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE BANISHMENT OF THE DUCHESS OF ST. LEU.

FOR the second time, the Bourbons had entered Paris under the protection of the allies, and Louis XVIII. was once more King of France. But this time he did not return with his former mild and conciliatory disposition. He came to punish and to reward; he came unaccompanied by mercy. The old generals and marshals of the empire, who had not been able to resist their chieftain's call, were now banished, degraded, or executed. Ney and Labédoyère paid for their fidelity to the emperor with their blood; and all who were in any way connected with the Bonapartes were relentlessly pursued. The calumnies that had been circulated in 1814 against the Duchess of St. Leu were now to bear bitter fruit. These were the dragon's teeth from which the armed warriors had sprung, who now levelled their swords at the breast of a defenceless woman.

King Louis had returned to the throne of his fathers,

##### THE BANISHMENT OF THE DUCHESS OF ST. LEU. 293

but he had not forgotten that he had been told on his flight: "The Duchess of St. Leu is to blame for all! Her intrigues have brought Napoleon back!" Now that he was again king, he thought of it, and determined to punish her. He requested it of Alexander, as a favor, that he should this time not call on the Duchess of St. Leu.

The emperor, dismayed by the odious reports in circulation concerning Hortense, and already enchained in the mystic glittering web with which Madame de Krüdener had enveloped him, and separated from the reality of the world, acceded to the wishes of the Bourbons, and abandoned the queen. This was the signal that let loose the general wrath of the royalists; they could now freely utter their scorn and malice. By low calumnies they could now compensate themselves for their humiliation of the past, for having been compelled to approach the daughter of Viscountess de Beauharnais with the reverence due to a queen.

They could pursue the step-daughter of the emperor with boundless fury, for this very fury proved their royalism, and to hate and calumniate Bonaparte and his family was to love and flatter the Bourbons.

Day by day these royalists hurled new accusations against the duchess, whose presence in Paris unpleasantly recalled the days of the empire, and whom they desired to remove from their sight, as well as the column on the *Place Vendôme*.

While the poor queen was living in the retirement of

her apartments, in sadness and desolation, the report was circulated that she was again conspiring, and that she was in the habit of leaving her house every evening at twilight, in order to incite the populace to rise and demand the emperor's return, or at least the instalment of the little King of Rome on the throne instead of Louis de Bourbon.

When the queen's faithful companion, Louise de Cochelet, informed her of these calumnies, Hortense remained cold and indifferent.

"Madame," exclaimed Louise, "you listen with as much composure as if I were reciting a story of the last century!"

"And it interests me as little," said Hortense, earnestly; "we have lost all, and I consider any blow that may still strike us, with the composure of an indifferent spectator. I consider it natural that they should endeavor to calumniate me, because I bear a name that has made the whole world tremble, and that will still be great, though we all be trodden in the dust. But I will shield myself and children from this hatred. We will leave France and go to Switzerland, where I possess a little estate on the Lake of Geneva."

But time was not allowed the duchess to prepare for her departure. The dogs of calumny and hatred were let loose upon her to drive her from the city. A defenceless woman with two young children seemed to be an object of anxiety and terror to the government, and it made haste to get rid of her.

On the morning of the 17th of July, an adjutant of the Prussian General de Müffling, the allied commandant of Paris, came to the dwelling of the Duchess of St. Leu, and informed her intendant, M. Deveaux, that the duchess must leave Paris within two hours, and it was only at the urgent solicitation of the intendant, that a further sojourn of four hours was allowed her.

Hortense was compelled to conform to this military command, and depart without arranging her affairs or making any preparations for her journey. Her only possession consisted of jewelry, and this she of course intended to take with her. But she was warned that a troop of enraged Bourbonists, who knew of her approaching departure, had quitted Paris to lie in wait for her on her road, "in order to rob her of the millions in her custody."

The queen was warned to take no money or articles of value with her, but only that which was absolutely necessary.

General de Müffling offered her an escort of his soldiers; Hortense declined this offer, but requested that an Austrian officer might be allowed to accompany her for the protection of herself and children on the journey. Count de Boyna, adjutant of Prince Schwartzberg, was selected for this purpose.

On the evening of the 17th of July, 1815, the Duchess of St. Leu took her departure. She left her faithful friend Louise de Cochelet in Paris to arrange her affairs, and assure the safe-keeping of her jewelry. Accompanied

only by her equerry, M. de Marmold, Count Boyna, her children, her maid, and a man-servant, she who had been a queen left Paris to go into exile.

It was a sorrowful journey that Hortense now made through her beloved France, that she could no longer call her country, and that now seemed as ill-disposed toward the emperor and his family as it had once passionately loved them.

In these days of political persecution, the Bonapartists had everywhere hidden themselves in obscure places, or concealed their real disposition beneath the mask of Bourbonism. Those whom Hortense met on her journey were therefore all royalists, who thought they could give no better testimony to their patriotism than by persecuting with cries of scorn, with gestures of hatred, and with loud curses, the woman whose only crime was that she bore the name of him whom France had once adored, and whom the royalists hated.

Count Boyna was more than once compelled to protect Hortense and her children against the furious attacks of royalists—the stranger against her own countrymen! In Dijon, Count Boyna had found it necessary to call on the Austrian military stationed there for assistance in protecting the duchess and her children from the attacks of an infuriated crowd, led by royal guards and beautiful ladies of rank, whose hair was adorned with the lilies of the Bourbons.\*

Dispirited and broken down by all she had seen and

\* Cochelet, vol. iii., p. 289.

experienced, Hortense at last reached Geneva, happy at the prospect of being able to retire to her little estate of Pregny, to repose after the storms of life. But this refuge was also to be refused her. The French ambassador in Switzerland, who resided in Geneva, informed the authorities of that city that his government would not tolerate the queen's sojourn so near the French boundary, and demanded that she should depart. The authorities of Geneva complied with this demand, and ordered the Duchess of St. Leu to leave the city immediately.

When Count Boyna imparted this intelligence to the duchess, and asked her to what place she would now go, her long-repressed despair found utterance in a single cry: "I know not. Throw me into the lake, then we shall all be at rest!"

But she soon recovered her usual proud resignation, and quietly submitted to the new banishment that drove her from her last possession, the charming little Pregny, from her "*rêve de chalet*."

In Aix she finally found repose and peace for a few weeks—in Aix, where she had once celebrated brilliant triumphs as a queen, and where she was at least permitted to live in retirement with her children and a few faithful adherents.

But in Aix the most fearful blow that Fate had in store for her fell upon her!

Her action against her husband had already been decided in 1814, shortly before the emperor's return, and it

had been adjudged that she should deliver her elder son, Napoleon Louis, into the custody of his father. Now that Napoleon's will no longer restrained him, Louis demanded that this judgment be carried out, and sent Baron von Zuyten to Aix to bring back the prince to his father, then residing in Florence.

The unhappy mother was now powerless to resist this hard command; she was compelled to yield, and send her son from her arms to a father who was a stranger to the boy, and whom he therefore could not love.

It was a heart-rending scene this parting between the boy, his mother, and his young brother Louis, from whom he had never before been separated for a day, and who now threw his arms around his neck, tearfully entreating him to stay with him.

But the separation was inevitable. Hortense parted the two weeping children, taking little Louis Napoleon in her arms, while Napoleon Louis followed his governor to the carriage, sobbing as though his heart would break. When Hortense heard the carriage driving off, she uttered a cry of anguish and fell to the ground in a swoon, and a long and painful attack of illness was the consequence of this sorrowful separation.

## CHAPTER II.

## LOUIS NAPOLEON AS A CHILD.

THE Duchess of St. Leu was, however, not destined to find repose in Aix; the Bourbons—not yet weary of persecuting her, and still fearing the name whose first and greatest representative was now languishing on a solitary, inhospitable rock-island—the Bourbons considered it dangerous that Hortense, the emperor's step-daughter, and her son, whose name of Louis Napoleon seemed to them a living monument of the past, should be permitted to sojourn so near the French boundary. They therefore instructed their ambassador to the government of Savoy to protest against the further sojourn of the queen in Aix, and Hortense was compelled to undertake a new pilgrimage, and to start out into the world again in search of a home.

She first turned to Baden, whose duchess, Stephanie, was so nearly related to her, and from whose husband she might therefore well expect a kindly reception. But the grand-duke did not justify his cousin's hopes; he had not the courage to defy the jealous fears of France, and it was only at the earnest solicitation of his wife that he at last consented that Hortense should take up her residence at the extreme end of the grand-duchy, at Constance, on the Lake of Constance; and this permission was only accorded her on the express condition that neither the duchess nor her son should ever come to