

tagious disease was ravaging the vicinity. "Is he indeed ill?" cried she, in dismay.

"Yes; and he earnestly desires to see you, madame!"

"Oh," exclaimed Hortense, in terror, "if he calls for me, he must be very ill indeed!—Forward, forward, with all possible speed; I must see my son!"

And onward they went with the speed of the wind from station to station, approaching nearer and nearer to their destination; but as they neared their destination, the faces they met grew sadder and sadder. At every station groups of people assembled about her carriage and gazed at her sorrowfully; everywhere she heard them murmur: "Napoleon is dead! Poor mother! Napoleon is dead!" Hortense heard, but did not believe it! These words had not been spoken by men, but were the utterances of her anxious heart! Her son was not dead, he could not be dead. Napoleon lived, yes, he still lived! And again the people around her carriage murmured, "Napoleon is dead!"

Hortense reclined in her carriage, pale and motionless. Her thoughts were confused, her heart scarcely beat.

At last she reached her destination; her carriage drove up to the house in Pesaro, where her sons were awaiting her.

At this moment a young man, his countenance of a deathly pallor, and flooded with tears, rushed out of the door and to her carriage. Hortense recognized him, and stretched out her arms to him. It was her son Louis

Napoleon, and on beholding his pale, sorrowful countenance, and his tear-stained eyes, the unhappy mother learned the truth. Yes, it was not her heart, it was the people who had uttered the fearful words: "Napoleon is dead! Poor mother! Napoleon is dead!"

With a heart-rending cry, Hortense sank to the ground in a swoon.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FLIGHT FROM ITALY.

BUT Hortense now had no leisure to weep over the son she had so dearly loved; the safety of the son who remained to her, whom she loved no less, and on whom her whole love must now be concentrated, was at stake.

She still had a son to save, and she must now think of him—of Louis Napoleon, who stood in sorrow at her side, lamenting that Fate had not allowed him to die with his brother.

Her son must be saved. This thought restored Hortense to health and strength. She is informed that the authorities of Bologna have already tendered submission to the Austrians; that the insurgent army is already scattering in every direction; that the Austrian fleet is already to be seen in the distance, approaching, perhaps with the intention of landing at Sinigaglia, in order to surround the insurgents and render flight impossible.

This intelligence aroused Hortense from her grief

and restored her energy. She ordered her carriage and drove with her son to Ancona, in full view of the people, in order that every one should know that it was her purpose to embark with her son for Corfu at that seaport. At Ancona, immediately fronting the sea, stood her nephew's palace, and there Hortense descended from her carriage.

The waves of the storm-tossed sea sometimes rushed up to the windows of the room occupied by the duchess; from there she could see the port, and the crowds of fugitives who were pressing forward to save themselves on the miserable little vessels that there lay at anchor.

And these poor people had but little time left them in which to seek safety. The Austrians were rapidly advancing; on entering the papal territory, they had proclaimed an amnesty, from the benefits of which Prince Louis Napoleon, General Zucchi, and the inhabitants of Modena, were, however, excepted. The strangers who had taken part in the insurrection were to be arrested and treated with all the severity of the law.

The young people who had flocked from Modena, Milan, and from all Italy, to enroll themselves under the banner of the Roman revolution, now found it necessary to seek safety from the pursuing Austrians in flight.

Louis Napoleon also had no time to lose; each moment lost might render flight impossible! Hortense was weary and ill, but she now had no time to think of herself; she must first save her son, then she could die, but not sooner.

With perfect composure she prepared for her double (her feigned and her real) departure.

Outwardly, she purposed embarking with her son at Corfu; secretly, it was her intention to fly to England through France! But the English passport that she had received for this purpose mentioned two sons, and Hortense now possessed but one; and it was necessary for her to provide a substitute for the one she had lost.

She found one in the person of the young Marquis Zappi, who, compromised more than all the rest, joyfully accepted the proposition of the Duchess of St. Leu, promising to conform himself wholly to her arrangements, without knowing her plans and without being initiated in her secrets.

Hortense then procured all that was necessary to the disguise of the young men as liveried servants, and ordered her carriage to be held in readiness for her departure.

While this was being done in secret, she publicly caused all preparations to be made for her journey to Corfu. She sent her passport to the authorities for the purpose of obtaining the official *visa* for herself and sons, and had her trunks packed. Louis Napoleon had looked on, with cold and mute indifference, while these preparations were being made. He stood by, pale and dejected, without complaining or giving utterance to his grief.

Becoming at last convinced that he was ill, Hortense sent for a physician.

The latter declared that the prince was suffering from a severe attack of fever, which might become dangerous unless he sought repose at once. It was therefore necessary to postpone their departure for a day, and Hortense passed an anxious night at the bedside of her fever-shaken, delirious son.

The morning at last dawned, the morning of the day on which they hoped to fly; but when the rising sun shed its light into the chamber in which Hortense stood at her son's bedside, who can describe the unhappy mother's horror when she saw her son's face swollen, disfigured, and covered with red spots!

Like his brother, Louis Napoleon had also taken the same disease.

For a moment Hortense was completely overwhelmed, and then, by the greatest effort of her life, she summoned her fortitude to her aid. She immediately sent for the physician again, and, trusting to a sympathetic human heart, she confided all to him, and he did not disappoint her. What is to be done must be done quickly, immediately, or it will be in vain!

Hortense thinks of all, and provides for all. Especially, she causes her son's passport to Corfu to be signed by the authorities, and a passage to be taken for him on the only ship destined for Corfu now lying in the harbor. She instructs the servants, who are conveying trunks and packages to the vessel, to inform the curious spectators of her son's intended departure on this vessel. She at the same time causes the report to be circulated that she has

suddenly been taken ill, and can therefore not accompany her son.

The physician confirms this statement, and informs all Ancona of the dangerous illness of the Duchess of St. Leu.

And after all this had been done, Hortense causes her son's bed to be carried into the little cabinet adjoining her room, and falling on her knees at his bedside, and covering her face with her hands, she prays to God to preserve the life of her child!

On the evening of this day the vessel destined for Corfu hoisted its anchor. No one doubted that Louis Napoleon had embarked on it, and every one pitied the poor duchess, who, made ill by grief and anxiety, had not been able to accompany her son.

In the mean while Hortense was sitting at the bedside of her delirious son. But she no longer felt weak or disquieted; nervous excitement sustained her, and gave her strength and presence of mind. Her son was at the same time threatened by two dangers—by the disease, which the slightest mistake might render mortal; and by the arrival of the Austrians, who had expressly excepted her son Louis Napoleon from the benefits of the amnesty. She must save her son from both these dangers—this thought gave her strength.

Two days had now passed; the last two vessels had left the harbor, crowded with fugitives; and now the advance-guard of the Austrians was marching into Ancona.

The commandant of the advance-guard, upon whom

the duty of designating quarters for the following army devolved, selected the palace of Princess Canino, where the Duchess of St. Leu resided, as headquarters for the commanding general and his staff. Hortense had expected this, and had withdrawn to a few small rooms in advance, holding all the parlors and large rooms in readiness for the general. When they, however, demanded that the entire palace should be vacated, the wife of the janitor, the only person whom Hortense had taken into her confidence, informed them that Queen Hortense, who was ill and unhappy, was the sole occupant of these reserved rooms.

Strange to relate, the Austrian captain who came to the palace to make the necessary preparations for his general's reception was one of those who, in the year 1815, had protected the queen and her children from the fury of the royalists. For the second time he now interested himself zealously in behalf of the duchess, and hastened forward to meet the general-in-chief, Baron Geppert, who was just entering the city, in order to acquaint him with the state of affairs. He, in common with all the world, convinced that her son, Louis Napoleon, had fled to Corfu, declared his readiness to permit the duchess to retain the rooms she was occupying, and begged permission to call on her. But the duchess was still ill, and confined to her bed, and could receive no one.

The Austrians took up their quarters in the palace; and in the midst of them, separated from the general's room by a locked door only, were Hortense and her sick

son. The least noise might betray him. When he coughed it was necessary to cover his head with the bed-clothes, in order to deaden the sound; when he desired to speak he could only do so in a whisper, for his Austrian neighbors would have been astonished to hear a male voice in the room of the sick duchess, and their suspicions might have been thereby aroused.

At last, after eight days of torment and anxiety, the physician declared that Louis Napoleon could now undertake the journey without danger, and consequently the duchess suddenly recovered! She requested the Austrian general, Baron Geppert, to honor her with a call, in order that she might thank him for his protection and sympathy; she told him that she was now ready to depart, and proposed embarking at Livorno, in order to join her son at Malta, and go with him to England. As she would be compelled to pass through the whole Austrian army-corps on her way, she begged the general to furnish her with a passport through his lines over his own signature; requesting in addition that, in order to avoid all sensation, the instrument should not contain her name.

The general, deeply sympathizing with the unhappy woman who was about to follow her proscribed son, readily accorded her request.

Hortense purposed beginning her journey on the following day, the first day of the Easter festival; and, on sending her farewell greeting to the Austrian general, she informed him that she would start at a very early hour, in order to hear mass at Loretto.

During the night all necessary preparations for the journey were made, and Louis Napoleon was compelled to disguise himself in the dress of a liveried servant; a similar attire was also sent to Marquis Zappi, who had hitherto been concealed in the house of a friend, and in this attire he was to await the duchess below at the carriage.

At last, day broke and the hour of departure came. The horn of the postilion resounded through the street. Through the midst of the sleeping Austrian soldiers who occupied the antechamber through which they were compelled to pass, Hortense walked, followed by her son, loaded with packages, in his livery. Their departure was witnessed by no one except the sentinel on duty.

Day had hardly dawned. In the first carriage sat the duchess, with a lady companion, and in front, on the box, her son, as a servant, at the side of the postilion; in the second carriage her maid, behind her the young Marquis Zappi.

As the sun arose and shone down upon the beautiful Easter day, Ancona was already far behind, and Hortense knelt down at the side of Louis Napoleon to thank God tearfully for having permitted her to succeed so far in rescuing her son, and to entreat Him to be merciful in the future. But there were still many dangers to be overcome; the slightest accident might still betray them. The danger consisted not only in having to pass through all the places where the Austrian troops were stationed; General Geppert's pass was a sufficient protection against any thing that might threaten them from this quarter.

The greatest danger was to be apprehended from their friends—from some one who might accidentally recognize her son, and unintentionally betray them.

They must pass through the grand-duchy of Tuscany, and there the greatest danger menaced, for there her son was known to every one, and every one might betray them. This part of the journey must therefore be made, as far as possible, by night. The courier whom they had dispatched in advance had everywhere ordered the necessary relays of horses; their dismay was, therefore, great when they found no horses at the station Camoscia, on the boundary of Tuscany, and were informed that several hours must elapse before they could obtain any!

These hours of expectation and anxiety were fearful. Hortense passed them in her carriage, breathlessly listening to the slightest noise that broke upon the air.

Her son Louis had descended from the carriage, and seated himself on a stone bench that stood in front of the miserable little station-house. Worn out by grief and still weak from disease, indifferent to the dangers that menaced from all sides, heedless of the night wind that swept, with its icy breath, over his face, the prince sank down upon this stone bench, and went to sleep.

Thus they passed the night. Hortense, once a queen, in a half-open carriage; Louis Napoleon, the present Emperor of France, on a stone bench, that served him as a couch!

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