

tirely with the friends and servants of the emperor and of the Duchess of St. Leu. But, in order not to excite suspicion against these, Hortense now addressed herself to him with whom she had the slightest acquaintance, and whose devotion to the Orleans family was too well known to be called in doubt by her undertaking. Hortense therefore addressed herself to M. de Houdetot, the adjutant of the king, or rather, she caused her friend Mlle. de Massuyer to write to him. She was instructed to inform the count that she had come to Paris with an English family, and was the bearer of a commission from the Duchess of St. Leu to M. de Houdetot.

M. de Houdetot responded to her request, and came to the *Hôtel de Hollande* to see Mlle. Massuyer. With surprise and emotion, he recognized in the supposititious English lady the Duchess of St. Leu, who was believed by all the world to be on the way to Malta, and for whom her friends (who feared the fatigue of so long a journey would be too much for Hortense in her weak state of health) had already taken steps to obtain for her permission to pass through France on her way to England.

Hortense informed Count Houdetot of the last strokes of destiny that had fallen upon her, and expressed her desire to see the king, in order to speak with him in person about the future of her son.

M. de Houdetot undertook to acquaint the king with her desire, and came on the following day to inform the duchess of the result of his mission. He told the duchess that the king had loudly lamented her boldness in

coming to France, and the impossibility of his seeing her. He told her, moreover, that, as the king had a responsible ministry at his side, he had been compelled to inform the premier of her arrival, and that Minister Casimir Perrier would call on her during the day.

A few hours later, Louis Philippe's celebrated minister arrived. He came with an air of earnest severity, as it were to sit in judgment upon the accused duchess, but her artless sincerity and her gentle dignity disarmed him, and soon caused him to assume a more delicate and polite bearing.

"I well know," said Hortense in the course of the conversation, "I well know that I have broken a law, by coming hither; I fully appreciate the gravity of this offence; you have the right to cause me to be arrested, and it would be perfectly just in you to do so!"—Casimir Perrier shook his head slowly, and replied: "Just, no! Lawful, yes!"*

CHAPTER VIII.

LOUIS PHILIPPE AND THE DUCHESS OF ST. LEU.

THE visit which Casimir Perrier had paid the duchess seemed to have convinced him that the fears which the king and his ministry had entertained had really been groundless, that the step-daughter of Napoleon had not come to Paris to conspire and to claim the still somewhat

* La Reine Hortense: Voyage en Italie, etc., p. 110.

unstable throne of France for the Duke de Reichstadt, or for Louis Napoleon, but that she had only chosen the way through France, in the anxiety of maternal love, in order to rescue her son.

In accordance with this conviction, Louis Philippe no longer considered it impossible to see the Duchess of St. Leu, but now requested her to call. Perhaps the king, who had so fine a memory for figures and money-matters, remembered that it had been Hortense (then still Queen of Holland) who, during the hundred days of the empire in 1815, had procured for the Duchess Orleans-Penthièvre, from the emperor, permission to remain in Paris and a pension of two hundred thousand francs per annum; that it had been Hortense who had done the same for the aunt of the present king, the Duchess of Orleans-Bourbon. Then, in their joy over an assured and brilliant future, these ladies had written the duchess the most affectionate and devoted letters; then they had assured Hortense of their eternal and imperishable gratitude.* Perhaps Louis Philippe remembered this, and was desirous of rewarding Hortense for her services to his mother and his aunt.

He solicited a visit from Hortense, and, on the second day of her sojourn in Paris, M. de Houdetot conducted the Duchess of St. Leu to the Tuileries, in which she had once lived as a young girl, as the step-daughter of the emperor; then as Queen of Holland, as the wife of the emperor's brother; and which she now beheld once more,

* La Reine Hortense: Voyage en Italie, etc., p. 185.

a poor, nameless pilgrim, a fugitive with shrouded countenance, imploring a little toleration and protection of those to whom she had once accorded toleration and protection.

Louis Philippe received the Duchess of St. Leu with all the elegance and graciousness which the "Citizen King" so well knew how to assume, and that had always been an inheritance of his house, with all the amiability and apparent open-heartedness beneath which he so well knew how to conceal his real disposition. Coming to the point at once, he spoke of that which doubtlessly interested the duchess most, of the decree of banishment.

"I am familiar," said the king, "with all the pains of exile, and it is not my fault that yours have not been alleviated." He assured her that this decree of banishment against the Bonaparte family was a heavy burden on his heart; he went so far as to excuse himself for it by saying that the exile pronounced against the imperial family was only an article of the same law which the conventionists had abolished, and the renewal of which had been so vehemently demanded by the country! Thus it had seemed as though he had uttered a new decree of banishment, while in point of fact he had only renewed a law that had already existed under the consulate of Napoleon. "But," continued the king with exultation, "the time is no longer distant when there will be no more exiles; I will have none under my government!"

Then, as if to remind the duchess that there had been

exiles and decrees of banishment at all times, also under the republic, the consulate, and the kingdom, he spoke of his own exile, of the needy and humiliating situation in which he had found himself, and which had compelled him to hire himself out as a teacher and give instruction for a paltry consideration.

The duchess had listened to the king with a gentle smile, and replied that she knew the story of his exile, and that it did him honor.

Then the duchess informed the king that her son had accompanied her on her journey, and was now with her in Paris; she also told him that her son, in his glowing enthusiasm for his country, had written to the king, begging that he might be permitted to enter the army.

"Lend me the letter," replied Louis Philippe; "Perrier shall bring it to me, and, if circumstances permit, I shall be perfectly willing to grant your son's request; and it will also give me great pleasure to serve you at all times. I know that you have legitimate claims on the government, and that you have appealed to the justice of all former ministries in vain. Write out a statement of all that France owes you, and send it *to me alone*. I understand business matters, and constitute myself from this time on your *chargé d'affaires*.* The Duke of Rovigo," he continued, "has informed me that the other members of the imperial family have similar claims. It will afford me great pleasure to be of assistance to all of you, and I

* The king's own words. See *Voyage en Italie*, etc., p. 201.

shall interest myself particularly for the Princess de Montfort."*

Hortense had listened to the king, her whole face radiant with delight. The king's beneficent countenance, his friendly smile, his hearty and cordial manner, dispelled all doubt of his sincerity in Hortense's mind. She believed in his goodness and in his kindly disposition toward herself; and, in her joyous emotion, she thanked him with words of enthusiasm for his promised benefits, never doubting that it was his intention to keep his word.

"Ah, sire!" she exclaimed, "the entire imperial family is in misfortune, and you will have many wrongs to redress. France owes us all a great deal, and it will be worthy of you to liquidate these debts."

The king declared his readiness to do every thing. He who was so fond of taking in millions and of speculating, smilingly promised, in the name of France, to disburse millions, and to pay off the old state debt!

The duchess believed him. She believed in his protestations of friendship, and in his blunt sincerity. She allowed him to conduct her to his wife, the queen, and was received by her and Madame Adelaide with the same cordiality the king had shown. Once only in the course of the conversation did Madame Adelaide forget her cordial disposition. She asked the duchess how long she expected to remain in Paris, and when the latter replied that she intended remaining three days longer, Madame

† The Princess de Montfort was the wife of Jerome, the sister of the King of Wurtemberg, and a cousin of the Emperor of Russia.

exclaimed, in a tone of anxious dismay: "So long! Three days still! And there are so many Englishmen here who have seen your son in Italy, and might recognize you here!"

But Fate itself seemed to delay the departure of the duchess and her son. On returning home from her visit to the Tuileries, she found her son on his bed in a violent fever, and the physician who had been called in declared that he was suffering from inflammation of the throat.

Hortense was to tremble once more for the life of a son, and this son was the last treasure Fate had left her.

Once more the mother sat at the bedside of her son, watching over him, lovingly, day and night. That her son's life might be preserved was now her only wish, her only prayer; all else became void of interest, and was lost sight of. She only left her son's side when Casimir Perrier came, as he was in the habit of doing daily, to inquire after her son's condition in the name of the king, and to request the duchess to name the amount of her claims against France, and to impart to him all her wishes with regard to her future. Hortense now had but one ardent wish—the recovery of her son; and her only request was, that she might be permitted to visit the French baths of the Pyrenees during the summer, in order to restore her failing health.

The minister promised to procure this permission of the king, and of the Chambers, that were soon to be convened. "In this way we shall gradually become accustomed to your presence," observed Casimir Perrier. "As

far as you are personally concerned, we shall be inclined to throw open the gates of the country to you. But with your son it is different, his name will be a perpetual obstacle in his way. If he should really desire at any time to take service in the army, it would be, above all, necessary that he should lay aside his name. We are in duty bound to consider the wishes of foreign governments: France is divided into so many parties, that a war could only be ruinous, and therefore your son must change his name, if—"

But now the duchess, her cheeks glowing, blushing with displeasure and anger, interrupted him. "What!" exclaimed she, "lay aside the noble name with which France may well adorn itself, conceal it as though we had cause to be ashamed of it?"

Beside herself with anger, regardless, in her agitation, even of the suffering condition of her son, she hastened to his bedside, to inform him of the proposition made to her by Louis Philippe's minister.

The prince arose in his couch, his eyes flaming, and his cheeks burning at the same time with the fever-heat of disease and of anger.

"Lay aside my name!" he exclaimed. "Who dares to make such a proposition to me? Let us think of all these things no more, mother. Let us go back to our retirement. Ah, you were right, mother: our time is passed, or it has not yet come!"