

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE DEPARTURE OF THE DUCHESS FROM PARIS.

EXCITEMENT had made the patient worse, and caused his fever to return with renewed violence. Hortense was now inseparable from his bedside; she herself applied ice to his burning throat, and assisted in applying the leeches ordered by the physician. But this continuous anxiety and excitement, all these troubles of the present, and sad remembrances of the past, had at last exhausted the strength of the delicate woman; the flush of fever now began to show itself on her cheeks also, and the physician urged her to take daily exercise in the open air if she desired to avoid falling ill.

Hortense followed his advice. In the evening twilight, in plain attire, her face concealed by a heavy black veil, she now daily quitted her son's bedside, and went out into the street for a walk, accompanied by the young Marquis Zappi. No one recognized her, no one greeted her, no one dreamed that the veiled figure that walked so quietly and shyly was she who, as Queen of Holland, had formerly driven through these same streets in gilded coaches, hailed by the joyous shouts of the people.

But, in these wanderings through Paris, Hortense also lived in her memories only. She showed the marquis the dwelling she had once occupied, and which had for her a single happy association: her sons had been born there. With a soft smile she looked up at the proud

*façade* of this building, the windows of which were brilliantly illumined, and in whose parlors some banker or ennobled provision-dealer was now perhaps giving a ball; pointing to these windows with her slender white hand, she said: "I wished to see this house, in order to reproach myself for having been unhappy in it; yes, I then dared to complain even in the midst of so much splendor; I was so far from dreaming of the weight of the misfortune that was one day to come upon me." \*

She looked down again and passed on, to seek the houses of several friends, of whom she knew that they had remained faithful; heavily veiled and enveloped in her dark cloak she stood in front of these houses, not daring to acquaint her friends with her presence, contented with the sweet sense of being near them!

When, after having strengthened her heart with the consciousness of being near friends, she passed on through the streets, in which she, the daughter of France, was now unknown, homeless, and forgotten!—no, not forgotten!—as she chanced to glance in at a store she was just passing, she saw in the lighted window her own portrait at the side of that of the emperor.

Overcome by a sweet emotion, Hortense stood still and gazed at these pictures. The laughing, noisy crowd on the sidewalk passed on, heedless of the shrouded woman who stood there before the shop-window, gazing with tearful eyes at her own portrait. "It seems we are still remembered," whispered she, in a low voice. "Those

\* The duchess's own words: see *Voyage*, etc., p. 225.

who wear crowns are not to be envied, and should not lament their loss; but is it possible that the love of the people, to receive which is so sweet, has not yet been wholly withdrawn from us?"

The profound indifference with which France had accepted the exile of the Bonapartes had grieved her deeply. She had only longed for some token of love and fidelity in order that she might go back into exile consoled and strengthened. And now she found it. France proved to her through these portraits that she was not forgotten.

Hortense stepped with her companion into the store to purchase the portraits of herself and of the emperor; and when she was told that these portraits were in great demand, and that many of them were sold to the people, she hardly found strength to repress the tears of blissful emotion that rose from her heart to her eyes. She took the portraits and hastened home, to show them to her son and to bring to him with them the love-greetings of France. While the duchess, her thoughts divided between the remembrances of the past and the cares and troubles of the present, had been sojourning in Paris for twelve days, all the papers were extolling the heroism of the duchess in having saved her son, and of her having embarked at Malta in order to take him to England.

Even the king's ministerial council occupied itself with this matter, and thought it proper to make representations to his majesty on the subject. Marshal Sebastiani informed the king that the Duchess of St. Leu, to

his certain knowledge, had landed at Corfu. With lively interest he spoke of the fatiguing journey at sea that the duchess would be compelled to make, and asked almost timidly if she might not be permitted to travel through France.

The king's countenance assumed an almost sombre look, and he replied, dryly: "Let her continue her journey." Casimir Perrier bowed his head over the paper that lay before him, in order to conceal his mirth, and minister Barthe availed himself of the opportunity to give a proof of his eloquence and of his severity, by observing that a law existed against the duchess, and that a law was a sacred thing that no one should be permitted to evade.

But the presence of the duchess, although kept a secret, began to cause the king and his premier Casimir Perrier more and more uneasiness. The latter had already once informed her through M. de Houdetot that her departure was absolutely necessary and must take place at once, and he had only been moved to consent to her further sojourn by the condition of the prince, whose inflammation of the throat had rendered a second application of leeches necessary.

They were now, however, on the eve of a great and dangerous day, of the 5th of May.\* The people of Paris were strangely moved, and the new government saw with much apprehension the dawn of this day of such great memories for France. There seemed to be some

\* The anniversary of Napoleon's death.

justification for this apprehension. Since the break of day, thousands of people had flocked to the column on the *Place Vendôme*. Silently and gravely they approached the monument, in order to adorn with wreaths of flowers the eagles, or to lay them at the foot of the column, and then to retire mournfully.

Hortense stood at the window of her apartment, looking on with folded hands and tears of bliss at the impressive and solemn scene that was taking place on the *Place Vendôme* beneath, when suddenly a violent knocking was heard at her door, and M. de Houdetot rushed in, a pale and sorrowful expression on his countenance.

"Duchess," said he breathlessly, "you must depart immediately, without an hour's delay! I am ordered to inform you of this. Unless the life of your son is to be seriously endangered, you must leave at once!"

Hortense listened to him tranquilly. She almost pitied the king—the government—to whom a weak woman and an invalid youth could cause such fear. How great must this fear be, when it caused them to disregard all the laws of hospitality and of decency! What had she done to justify this fear? She had not addressed herself to the people of France, in order to obtain help and protection for her son—for the nephew of the emperor; cautiously and timidly she had concealed herself from the people, and, far from being disposed to arouse or agitate her country, she had only made herself known to the King of France in order to solicit protection and toleration at his hands.

She was distrusted, in spite of this candor; and her presence, although known to no one, awakened apprehensions in those in authority. Hortense pitied them; not a word of complaint or regret escaped her lips. She sent for her physician at once; and, after informing him that she must necessarily depart for London, she asked him if such a journey would endanger her son's life. The physician declared that, while he could have desired a few days more of repose, the prince would nevertheless, with proper care and attention, be able to leave on the following day.

"Inform the king that I shall depart to-morrow," said Hortense; and, while M. de Houdetot was hastening to the king with this welcome intelligence, the duchess was making preparations for the journey, which she began with her son early on the following morning.

In four days they reached Calais, where they found the ship that was to convey them to England in readiness to sail. Hortense was to leave her country once more as a fugitive and exile! She was once more driven out, and condemned to live in a foreign country! Because the French people still refused to forget their emperor, the French kings hated and feared the imperial family. Under the old Bourbons, they had been hated; Louis Philippe, who had attained his crown through the people, felt that it was necessary to flatter the people, and show some consideration for their sympathies. He declared to the people that he entertained the most profound admiration for their great emperor, and yet he

issued a decree of banishment against the Bonapartes; he ordered that the *Vendôme* column, with its bronze statue of the emperor, should be adorned, and at the same time his decree banished the daughter and the nephew of the emperor from France, and drove them back into a foreign country.

Hortense went, but she felt, in the pain it caused her, that she was leaving her country—the country in which she had friends whom she had not seen again; the country in which lay her mother's grave, which she had not dared to visit; and, finally, the grave of her son! She once more left behind her all the remembrances of her youth—all the places she had loved; and her regret and her tears made known how dear these things still were to her; that the banished and homeless one was still powerless to banish the love of country from her heart, and that France was still her home!

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## CHAPTER X.

### PILGRIMAGE THROUGH FRANCE.

THE sojourn of the Duchess of St. Leu in England where she arrived with her son after a stormy passage, was for both a succession of triumphs and ovations. The high aristocracy of London heaped upon her proofs of esteem, of reverence, and of love; every one seemed anxious to atone for the severity and cruelty with which

England had treated the emperor, by giving proofs of their admiration and respect for his step-daughter. All these proud English aristocrats seemed desirous of proving to the duchess and her son that they were not of the same disposition as Hudson Lowe, who had slowly tormented the chained lion to death with petty annoyances.

The Duchess of Bedford, Lord and Lady Holland, and Lady Grey, in particular, were untiring in their efforts to do the honors of their country to Hortense, and to show her every possible attention. But Hortense declined their proffered invitations. She avoided all publicity; she feared, on her own and her son's account, that the tattle of the world and the newspapers might once more draw down upon her the distrust and ill-will of the French government. She feared that this might prevent her returning with her son, through France, to her quiet retreat on the Lake of Constance, in Switzerland, to her charming Arenenberg, where she had passed so many delightful and peaceful years of repose and remembrance.

Hortense was right. Her sojourn in England excited, as soon as it became known, in every quarter, care, curiosity, and disquiet. All parties were seeking to divine the duchess's intention in residing in London. All parties were convinced that she entertained plans that might endanger and frustrate their own. The Duchess de Berri, who resided in Bath, had come to London as soon as she heard of the arrival of the Duchess of St. Leu, in order to inquire into Hortense's real intention. The bold and enterprising Duchess de Berri was prepar-