

unchangeable love and fidelity! Alas! how sorrowful and painful it is to be forgotten! * How—”

Suddenly she was interrupted by the tones of a piano, that resounded in her immediate vicinity. Behind the bench on which they were sitting, were the windows of the parlor of the hotel. These windows were open, and each tone of the music within could be heard with the greatest distinctness.

The playing was now interrupted by a female voice, which said: “Sing us a song, my daughter.”

“What shall I sing?” asked another and more youthful voice.

“Sing the beautiful, touching song your brother brought you from Paris yesterday. The song of Delphine Gay, set to music by M. de Beauplan.”

“Ah, you mean the song about Queen Hortense, who comes to Paris as a pilgrim? You are right, mamma, it is a beautiful and touching song, and I will sing it!”

And the young lady struck the keys more forcibly, and began to play the prelude.

Outside on the stone bench sat she who was once Queen Hortense, but was now the poor, solitary pilgrim. Nothing remained to her of the glorious past, but her son, who sat at her side! Hand in hand, both breathless with emotion, both pale and tearful, they listened until the young girl concluded her touching song.

* The duchess's own words. See *Voyage en Italie*, etc., p. 305.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

THIS sorrowful pilgrimage was at last at an end. Hortense was once more in her mountain-home, in the charming villa overlooking the Lake of Constance, and commanding a lovely view of the majestic lake, with its island and its surrounding cities and villages.

Honor to the Canton Thurgau, which, when all the world turned its back on the queen upon whom all the governments and destiny alike frowned—when even her nearest relatives, the Grand-duke and the Grand-duchess Stephanie of Baden, were compelled to forbid her residence in their territory—still had the courage to offer the Duchess of St. Leu an asylum, and to accord her, on the free soil of the little republic, a refuge from which the ill-will and distrust of the mighty could not drive her!

In Arenenberg, Hortense reposed from her weariness. With a bleeding breast she returned home, her heart wounded by a fearful blow, the loss of a noble and beloved son, broken in spirit, and bowed down by the coldness and cruelty of the world, which, in the cowardly fear of its egoism, had become faithless, even to the holiest and most imperishable of all religions, the religion of memory!

How many, who had once vowed love and gratitude, had abandoned her! how many, whom she had benefited had deserted her in the hour of peril!

In the generosity and kindliness of her heart, she forgave them all; and, instead of nursing a feeling of bitterness, she pitied them! She had done with the outer world! Arenenberg was now her world—Arenenberg, in which her last and only happiness, her son, the heir of the imperial name, lived with her—Arenenberg, which was as a temple of memory, in which Hortense was the pious and believing priestess.

At Arenenberg Hortense wrote the sad and touching story of her journey through Italy, France, and England, which she undertook, in the heroism of maternal love, in order to rescue her son. The noblest womanhood, the most cultivated mind, the proudest and purest soul, speaks from out this book, with which Hortense has erected a monument to herself that is more imperishable than all the monuments of stone and bronze, for this monument speaks to the heart—those to the eyes only. Hortense wrote this book with her heart often interrupted by the tears that dimmed her eyes; she concludes it with a touching appeal to the French people, which it may well be permitted us to repeat here; it is as follows:

“The renewal of the law of exile, and the assimilation made between us and the Bourbons, testify to the sentiments and fears that are entertained respecting us. No friendly voice has been raised in our behalf; this indifference has doubled the bitterness of our banishment! May they, however, still be happy—those who forget! May they, above all, make France happy! This is my prayer!

“As for the people, it will, if it remembers its glory, its grandeur, and the incessant care of which it was the object, ever hold our memory dear. This is my firm conviction, and this thought is the sweetest consolation of an exile, the sweetest consolation he can take with him to the grave!”*

Hortense still lived a few years of peaceful tranquility; far from all she loved—far also from the son who was her last hope, never dreaming that destiny had so brilliant a future in store for him, and that Louis Napoleon, whom the Bourbons had banished from France as a child, and the Orleans as a youth—that Louis Napoleon would one day be enthroned in Paris as emperor, while the Bourbons and Orleans languish in foreign lands as exiles!

In the year 1837, Hortense, the flower of the Bonapartes, died!

Weary, at last, of misfortune, and of the exile in which she languished, she bowed her head, and went home to her great dead—home to Napoleon and Josephine!

* Voyage en Italie, etc., p. 324.

THE END.

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