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HORTENSE.





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THE HISTORY

OF

HORTENSE,

DAUGHTER OF JOSEPHINE, QUEEN OF HOLLAND,
MOTHER OF NAPOLEON III.

By JOHN S. C. ABBOTT,

AUTHOR OF

"THE FRENCH REVOLUTION," "HISTORY OF NAPOLEON BONA-
PARTE," &c., &c.

WITH ENGRAVINGS.

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PREFACE.

THE French Revolution was perhaps as important an event as has occurred in the history of nations. It was a drama in three acts. The first was the Revolution itself, properly so called, with its awful scenes of terror and of blood—the exasperated millions struggling against the accumulated oppression of ages.

The second act in the drama was the overthrow of the Directory by Napoleon, and the introduction of the Consulate and the Empire; the tremendous struggle against the combined dynasties of Europe; the demolition of the Empire, and the renewed crushing of the people by the triumph of the nobles and the kings. Then came the third act in the drama—per-

haps the last, perhaps not—in which the French people again drove out the Bourbons, re-established the Republican Empire, with its principle of equal rights for all, and placed upon the throne the heir of the great Emperor.

No man can understand the career of Napoleon I. without being acquainted with those scenes of anarchy and terror which preceded his reign. No man can understand the career of Napoleon III. unless familiar with the struggle of the people against the despots in the Revolution, their triumph in the Empire, their defeat in its overthrow, and their renewed triumph in its restoration.

Hortense was intimately associated with all these scenes. Her father fell beneath the slide of the guillotine; her mother was imprisoned and doomed to die; and she and her brother were turned penniless into the streets. By the marriage of her mother with Napoleon, she became the daughter of the Emperor, and one of the most brilliant and illustrious ladies of the imperial court. The triumph of the Allies sent her into exile, where her influence and

her instruction prepared her son to contribute powerfully to the restoration of the Empire, and to reign with ability which is admired by his friends and acknowledged by his foes. The mother of Napoleon III. never allowed her royally-endowed son to forget, even in the gloomiest days of exile and of sorrow, that it might yet be his privilege to re-establish the Republican Empire, and to restore the dynasty of the people from its overthrow by the despotic Allies.

In this brief record of the life of one who experienced far more than the usual vicissitudes of humanity, whose career was one of the saddest upon record, and who ever exhibited virtues which won the enthusiastic love of all who knew her, the writer has admitted nothing which can not be sustained by incontrovertible evidence, and has suppressed nothing sustained by any testimony worthy of a moment's respect. This history will show that Hortense had her faults. Who is without them? There are not many, however, who will read these pages without profound admi-

ration for the character of one of the noblest of women, and without finding the eye often dimmed, in view of her heart-rending griefs.

This volume will soon be followed by the History of Louis Philippe.

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