

Amiability of Hortense.

"At length the time arrived for me to bid adieu to Switzerland. It was arranged that I should set out for Italy with a small party of my Wolfberg friends. An evening or two before we departed we paid a leave-taking visit to the duchess. She expressed much polite regret at our intention, and gave us a cordial invitation to renew our acquaintance with her in the winter at Rome. Her care, indeed, to leave a good impression of her friendly disposition upon our minds, was exceedingly gratifying. She professed to take an interest in the plans which each of us had formed, and, when her experience qualified her, gave us instructions for our travels.

"When we rose to depart, the night being fine, she volunteered to walk part of the way home with us. She came about a quarter of a mile to where she could command an uninterrupted view of the lake, above which the moon was just then rising, a huge red orb which shot a burning column to her feet. 'I will now bid you adieu,' she said; and we left her to the calm contemplation of grandeur which could not fade, and enjoyments which could not betray. This was the last time I saw, and perhaps shall ever see Hortense; but I shall al-

The city home of Hortense and her son.

ways remember my brief acquaintance with her as a dip into days which gave her country the character of being the most polished of nations."

Hortense, with her son Louis Napoleon, had been in the habit of passing the severity of the winter months in the cities of Augsburg or Munich, spending about eight months of the year at Arenenberg. But after the death of her brother Eugene, the associations which those cities recalled were so painful that she transferred her winter residence to Rome or Florence. An English lady who visited her at Arenenberg writes:

"The style of living of the Duchess of St. Leu is sumptuous, without that freezing etiquette so commonly met with in the great. Her household still call her *Queen*, and her son *Prince* Napoleon or *Prince* Louis. The suite is composed of two ladies of honor, an equerry, and the tutor of her younger son. She has a numerous train of domestics, and it is among them that the traces are still observable of bygone pretensions, long since abandoned by the true nobleness of their mistress. The former queen, the daughter of Napoleon, the mother of the Imperial heir-apparent, has returned

Testimony of an English lady.

quietly to private life with the perfect grace of a voluntary sacrifice.

“The duchess receives strangers with inexpressible kindness. Ever amiable and obliging, she is endowed with that charming simplicity which inspires, at first sight, the confidence of intimate affection. She speaks freely of the brilliant days of her prosperity. And history then flows so naturally from her lips, that more may be learned as a delighted listener, than from all the false or exaggerated works so abundant everywhere. The deposed queen considers past events from such an eminence that nothing can interpose itself between her and the truth. This strict impartiality gives birth to that true greatness, which is a thousand times preferable to all the splendors she lost in the flower of her age.

“I have been admitted to the intimacy of the Duchess of St. Leu, both at Rome and in the country. I have seen her roused to enthusiasm by the beauties of nature, and have seen her surrounded by the pomp of ceremony; but I have never known her less than herself; nor has the interest first inspired by her character ever been diminished by an undignified sentiment or the slightest selfish reflection.

The Duchess of St. Leu.

“It is impossible to be a more ardent and tasteful admirer of the fine arts than is the duchess. Every one has heard her beautiful *romances*, which are rendered still more touching by the soft and melodious voice of the composer. She usually sings standing; and, although a finished performer on the harp and piano, she prefers the accompaniment of one of her attendant ladies. Many of her leisure hours are employed in painting. Miniatures, landscapes, and flowers are equally the subjects of her pencil. She declaims well, is a delightful player in comedy, acts proverbs with uncommon excellence, and I really know no one who can surpass her in every kind of needle-work.

“The Duchess of St. Leu never was a regular beauty, but she is still a charming woman. She has the softest and most expressive blue eyes in the world. Her light flaxen hair contrasts beautifully with the dark color of her long eyelashes and eyebrows. Her complexion is fresh and of an even tint; her figure elegantly moulded; her hands and feet perfect. In fine, her whole appearance is captivating in the extreme. She speaks quickly with rapid gestures, and all her movements are easy and graceful. Her style of dress is rich, though she

has parted with most of her jewels and precious stones."

Hortense was almost invariably accompanied by her son, Louis Napoleon, whether residing in Italy or in Switzerland. When at Arenenberg, the young prince availed himself of the vicinity to the city in pursuing a rigorous course of study in physics and chemistry under the guidance of a very distinguished French philosopher. He also connected himself, in prosecuting his military studies, with a Baden regiment garrisoned at Constance. He was here recognized as the Duke of St. Leu, and was always received with much distinction. At Rome, the residence of Hortense was the centre of the most brilliant and polished society of the city. Here her son was introduced to the most distinguished men from all lands, and especially to the old friends of the Empire, who kept alive in his mind the memory of the brilliant exploits of him whose name he bore. Pauline Bonaparte, who had married for her second husband Prince Borghese, and who was immensely wealthy, also resided in the vicinity of Rome, in probably the most magnificent villa in Europe. Hortense and her son were constant visitors at her residence.

Madame Récamier, who had ever been the warm friend of the Bourbons, and whom Hortense had befriended when the Bourbons were in exile, gives the following account of an interview she had with Queen Hortense in Rome, early in the year 1824. The two friends had not met since the "Hundred Days" in 1815. We give the narrative in the words of Madame Récamier :

"I went one day to St. Peter's to listen to the music, so beautiful under the vaults of that immense edifice. There, leaning against a pillar, meditating under my veil, I followed with heart and soul the solemn notes that died away in the depths of the dome. An elegant-looking woman, veiled like myself, came and placed herself near the same pillar. Every time that a more lively feeling drew from me an involuntary movement my eyes met those of the stranger. She seemed to be trying to recognize my features. And I, on my side, through the obstacle of our veils, thought I distinguished blue eyes and light hair that were not unknown to me. 'Madame Récamier!' 'Is it you, madame?' we said almost at the same moment. 'How delighted I am to see you!' said Queen Hortense, for she it was. 'You know,' she added, smil-

Madame Récamier meets Hortense.

ing, 'that I would not have waited until now to find you out; but you have always been ceremonious with me.'

"'Then, madame,' I replied, 'my friends were exiled and unfortunate. You were happy and brilliant, and my place was not near you.'

"'If misfortune has the privilege of attracting you,' replied the queen, 'you must confess that my time has come and permit me to advance my claims.'

"I was a little embarrassed for a reply. My connection with the Duke de Laval, our ambassador at Rome, and with the French Government in general, was a barrier to any visiting between us. She understood my silence.

"'I know,' she said, sadly, 'that the inconveniences of greatness follow us still, when even our prerogatives are gone. Thus, with loss of rank, I have not acquired liberty of action. I can not to-day even taste the pleasures of a woman's friendship, and peaceably enjoy society that is pleasant and dear to me.'

"I bowed my head with emotion, expressing my sympathy only by my looks.

"'But I must talk to you,' said the queen, more warmly. 'I have so many things to say to you. If we can not visit each other, nothing

Interview with Madame Récamier.

prevents us from meeting elsewhere. We will appoint some place to meet. That will be charming.'

"'Charming indeed, madame,' I replied, smiling; 'and especially for me. But how shall we fix the time and place for these interviews?'

"'It is you,' Hortense replied, 'who must arrange that; for, thanks to the solitude forced upon me, my time is entirely at my own disposal. But it may not be the same with you. Sought for as you are, you mix, no doubt, a great deal in society.'

"'Heaven forbid!' I replied. 'On the contrary, I lead a very retired life. It would be absurd to come to Rome to see society, and people everywhere the same. I prefer to visit what is peculiarly her own—her monuments and ruins.'

"'Well, then, we can arrange every thing finely,' added Hortense; 'if it is agreeable to you I will join you in these excursions. Let me know each day your plans for the next; and we will meet, as if by accident, at the appointed places.'

"I eagerly accepted this offer, anticipating much pleasure in making the tour of old Rome with so gracious and agreeable a companion,

Arrangements for meeting.

and one who loved and understood art. The queen, on her side, was happy in the thought that I would talk to her of France; whilst to both of us the little air of mystery thrown over these interviews gave them another charm.

"Where do you propose to go to-morrow?" asked the queen.

"To the Coliseum."

"You will assuredly find me there," Hortense replied. "I have much to say to you. I wish to justify myself in your eyes from an imputation that distresses me."

"The queen began to enter into explanations; and the interview threatening to be a long one, I frankly reminded her that the French ambassador, who had brought me to St. Peter's, was coming back for me; for I feared that a meeting would be embarrassing to both.

"You are right," said the queen. "We must not be surprised together. Adieu, then. To-morrow at the Coliseum;" and we separated."

Madame Récamier, the bosom-friend of Chateaubriand, was in entire political sympathy with the illustrious poet. She regarded legitimacy as a part of her religion, and was intensely

Difficulty between Napoleon and Madame Récamier.

devoted to the interests of the Bourbons. She was one of the most beautiful and fascinating women who ever lived. Napoleon at St. Helena, in allusion to this remarkable lady, said:

"I was scarcely First Consul ere I found myself at issue with Madame Récamier. Her father had been placed in the Post-office Department. I had found it necessary to sign, in confidence, a great number of appointments; but I soon established a very rigid inspection in every department. A correspondence was discovered with the Chouans, going on under the connivance of M. Bernard, the father of Madame Récamier. He was immediately dismissed, and narrowly escaped trial and condemnation to death. His daughter hastened to me, and upon her solicitation I exempted M. Bernard from taking his trial, but was resolute respecting his dismissal. Madame Récamier, accustomed to obtain every thing, would be satisfied with nothing less than the reinstatement of her father. Such were the morals of the times. My severity excited loud animadversions. It was a thing quite unusual. Madame Récamier and her party never forgave me."*

* Abbott's "Napoleon at St. Helena," p. 94.

Banishment of Madame de Staël.

The home of Madame De Staël, who was the very intimate friend of Madame Récamier, became, in the early stages of the Empire, the rendezvous of all those who were intriguing for the overthrow of the government of Napoleon. The Emperor, speaking upon this subject at St. Helena, said :

“The house of Madame De Staël had become quite an arsenal against me. People went there to be armed knights. She endeavored to raise enemies against me, and fought against me herself. She was at once Armida and Clorinda. It can not be denied that Madame de Staël is a very distinguished woman. She will go down to posterity. At the time of the Concordat, against which Madame de Staël was violently inflamed, she united at once against me the aristocrats and the republicans. Having at length tired out my patience, she was sent into exile. I informed her that I left her the universe for the theatre of her achievements; that I reserved only Paris for myself, which I forbade her to approach, and resigned the rest of the world to her.”

The banishment of Madame de Staël from Paris excited as much bitterness in the soul of Madame Récamier as it was possible for a lady

Cause of Madame Récamier's banishment.

of such rare amiability and loveliness of character to feel. Madame Récamier, in giving an account of this transaction, says :

“I had a passionate admiration for Madame de Staël; and this harsh and arbitrary act showed me despotism under its most odious aspect. The man who banished a woman, and such a woman,—who caused her such unhappiness, could only be regarded by me as an unmerciful tyrant; and from that hour I was against him.”

The result was that Madame Récamier was forbidden to reside within one hundred and twenty miles of Paris. The reason which Napoleon assigned for these measures was, that Madame de Staël, with the most extraordinary endowments of mind, and Madame Récamier, with charms of personal loveliness which had made her renowned through all Europe, were combining their attractions in forming a conspiracy which would surely deluge the streets of Paris in blood. Napoleon affirmed that though the Government was so strong that it could certainly crush an insurrection in the streets, he thought it better to prohibit these two ladies any further residence in Paris, rather than leave them to foment rebellion, which

She returns to Paris.

would cost the lives of many thousands of comparatively innocent persons.

When the Bourbons, at the first restoration, returned to Paris, in the rear of the batteries of the Allies, Madame Récamier again took up her residence in Paris. Her saloons were thronged with the partisans of the old régime, and she was universally recognized as the queen of fashion and beauty. She was in the enjoyment of a very large income, kept her carriage, had a box at the opera, and on opera nights had receptions after the performances. The wheel of fortune had turned, and she was now in the ascendant. Lord Wellington was among her admirers. But the brusque, unpolished duke disgusted the refined French lady by his boast to her, "I have given Napoleon a good beating."

Still the wheel continued its revolution. Napoleon returned from Elba. The Bourbons and their partisans fled precipitately from France. But, in the interim, Madame Récamier and Madame de Staël had dined with the Duchess of St. Leu, at her estate a few leagues from Paris. The return of Napoleon plunged Madame Récamier and her friend into the utmost consternation. She was very unwilling again to leave Paris. In this emergency, Hor-

Hortense exiled.

tense, who was then at the Tuileries, wrote to her under date of March 23, 1815:

"I hope that you are tranquil. You may trust to me to take care of your interests. I am convinced that I shall not have occasion to show you how delighted I should be to be useful to you. Such would be my desire. But under any circumstances count upon me, and believe that I shall be very happy to prove my friendship for you. HORTENSE."

The "Hundred Days" passed away. The Bourbons were re-enthroned. Madame Récamier was again a power in Paris. Hortense, deprived of the duchy of St. Leu, was driven an exile out of France. Fifteen years had rolled away, and these two distinguished ladies had not met until the accidental interview to which we have alluded beneath the dome of St. Peter's Cathedral. They were friends, though one was the representative of aristocracy and the other of the rights of the people.

According to the arrangement which they had made, Hortense and Madame Récamier met the next day at the Coliseum. Though it is not to be supposed that Madame Récamier would make any false representations, it is evi-

Interview at the Coliseum.

dent that, under the circumstances, she would not soften any of the expressions of Hortense, or represent the conversation which ensued in any light too favorable to Napoleon. We give the narrative, however, of this very interesting interview in the words of Madame Récamier :

“The next day, at the Ave Maria, I was at the Coliseum, where I saw the queen’s carriage, which had arrived a few minutes before me. We entered the amphitheatre together, complimenting each other on our punctuality, and strolled through this immense ruin as the sun was setting, and to the sound of distant bells.

“Finally we seated ourselves on the steps of the cross in the centre of the amphitheatre, while Charles Napoleon Bonaparte and M. Ampère, who had followed us, walked about at a little distance. The night came on—an Italian night. The moon rose slowly in the heavens, behind the open arcades of the Coliseum. The breeze of evening sighed through the deserted galleries. Near me sat this woman, herself the living ruin of so extraordinary a fortune. A confused and undefinable emotion forced me to silence. The queen also seemed absorbed in her reflections.



INTERVIEW IN THE COLISEUM.

“‘How many events have contributed to bring us together,’ she said finally, turning towards me, ‘events of which I often have been the puppet or the victim, without having foreseen or provoked them.’

“I could not help thinking that this pretension to the rôle of a victim was a little hazardous. At that time I was under the conviction that she had not been a stranger to the return from the island of Elba. Doubtless the queen divined my thoughts, since it is hardly possible for me to hide my sentiments. My bearing and face betray me in spite of myself.

“‘I see plainly,’ she said earnestly, ‘that you share an opinion that has injured me deeply; and it was to controvert it that I wanted to speak to you freely. Henceforth you will justify me, I hope; for I can clear myself of the charge of ingratitude and treason, which would abase me in my own eyes if I had been guilty of them.’

“She was silent a moment and then resumed. ‘In 1814, after the abdication of Fontainebleau, I considered that the Emperor had renounced all his rights to the throne, and that his family ought to follow his example. It was my wish to remain in France, under a title that would