

## CHAPTER XI.

THE DEATH OF HORTENSE, AND THE  
ENTHRONEMENT OF HER SON.

AFTER a short tarry at Rio Janeiro, during which the prince was not permitted to land, the frigate again set sail, and on the 30th of March, 1837, reached Norfolk, Virginia. The prince proceeded immediately to New York. By a cruel error, which has mistaken him for one of his cousins, Pierre Bonaparte, a very wild young man, the reputation of Louis Napoleon has suffered very severely in this country. The evidence is conclusive that there has been a mistake. Louis Napoleon, thoughtful, studious, pensive, has ever been at the farthest possible remove from vulgar dissipation.

A writer in the *Home Journal*, whose reliability is vouched for by the editor, says, in reference to his brief residence in New York: "He is remembered as a quiet, melancholy man, winning esteem rather by the unaffected modesty of his demeanor than by éclat of lin-

eage or the romantic incidents which had befallen him. In the words of a distinguished writer, who well knew him at that day: 'So unostentatious was his deportment, so correct, so pure his life, that even the ripple of scandal can not appear plausibly upon its surface.' We have inquired of those who entertained him as their guest, of those who tended at his sick-bed, of the artist who painted his miniature, of his lady friends (and he was known to some who yet adorn society), of politicians, clergymen, editors, gentlemen of leisure, in fact, of every source whence reliable information could be obtained, and we have gathered but accumulated testimonials to his intrinsic worth and fair fame."

Prince Louis Napoleon remained in this country but seven weeks. The testimony of all who knew him is uncontradicted, that he was peculiarly winning in his attractions as a friend, and irreproachable as a man. Rev. Charles S. Stewart, of the United States Navy, was intimately acquainted with him during the whole period of his residence here. He writes:

"The association was not that of hours only but of days, and on one occasion, at least, of days in succession; and was characterized by

Elevated personal character.

a freedom of conversation on a great variety of topics that could scarce fail, under the ingenuousness and frankness of his manner, to put me in possession of his views, principles, and feelings upon most points that give insight to character.

"I never heard a sentiment from him and never witnessed a feeling that could detract from his honor and purity as a man, or his dignity as a prince. On the contrary, I often had occasion to admire the lofty thought and exalted conceptions which seemed most to occupy his mind. He was winning in the invariableness of his amiability, often playful in spirits and manner, and warm in his affections. He was a most fondly attached son and seemed to idolize his mother. When speaking of her, the intonations of his voice and his whole manner were often as gentle and feminine as those of a woman.

"In both eating and drinking he was, as far as I observed, abstemious rather than self-indulgent. I repeatedly breakfasted, dined, and supped in his company; and never knew him to partake of any thing stronger in drink than the light wines of France and Germany, and of these in great moderation. I have been with

Testimony to his private worth.

him early and late, unexpectedly as well as by appointment, and never saw reason for the slightest suspicion of any irregularity in his habits."

Such is the testimony, so far as can be ascertained, of every one who enjoyed any personal acquaintance with Louis Napoleon while in this country. He was the guest of Washington Irving, Chancellor Kent, and of the Hamiltons, Clintons, Livingstons, and other such distinguished families in New York.

While busily engaged in studying the institutions of our country and making arrangements for quite an extensive tour through the States, he received a letter from his mother which immediately changed all his plans. The event is thus described by Mr. Stewart:

"With this expectation he consulted me and others as to the arrangement of the route of travel, so as to visit the different sections of the Union at the most desirable seasons. But his plans were suddenly changed by intelligence of the serious illness of Queen Hortense, or, as then styled, the Duchess of St. Leu. I was dining with him the day the letter conveying this information was received. Recognizing the writing on the envelope, as it was handed

Letter from Hortense to her son.

to him at the table, he hastily broke the seal and had scarce glanced over half a page before he exclaimed:

“My mother is ill. I must see her. Instead of a tour of the States, I shall take the next packet for England. I will apply for passports for the Continent at every embassy in London, and if unsuccessful, will make my way to her without them.”

The following was the letter which he received from his mother:

“MY DEAR SON,—I am about to submit to an operation which has become absolutely necessary. If it is not successful I send you, by this letter, my benediction. We shall meet again, shall we not? in a better world, where may you come to join me as late as possible. In leaving this world I have but one regret; it is to leave you and your affectionate tenderness—the greatest charm of my existence here. It will be a consolation to you, my dear child, to reflect that by your attentions you have rendered your mother as happy as it was possible for her, in her circumstances, to be. Think that a loving and a watchful eye still rests on the dear ones we leave behind, and that we shall surely meet

Anxieties, sorrows, and sickness of Hortense.

again. Cling to this sweet idea. It is too necessary not to be true. I press you to my heart, my dear son. I am very calm and resigned, and hope that we shall again meet in this world. Your affectionate mother,

“HORTENSE.

“Arenenberg, April 3, 1837.”

As we have mentioned, Queen Hortense, upon receiving news of the arrest of her son, hastened to France to do what she could to save him. Madame Récamier found her at Viry, in great anguish of spirit. When she received tidings of his banishment she returned, overwhelmed with the deepest grief, to her desolated home. It seems that even then an internal disease, which, with a mother's love, she had not revealed to her son, was threatening her life. Madame Récamier, as she bade her adieu, was much moved by the great change in her appearance. The two friends never met again.

Madame Salvage, a distinguished lady, who had devoted herself with life-long enthusiasm to the Queen of Holland, accompanied her to France and returned with her to Arenenberg. On the 13th of April, Madame Salvage wrote

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Letter to Madame Récamier.

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the following letter from Arenemberg to Madame Récamier.

"I wrote you a long letter four days ago, dear friend, telling you of my unhappiness. I received yesterday your letter of the 7th, for which I thank you. I needed it much, and it is a consolation to me.

"I have informed Madame, the Duchess of St. Leu, of the lively interest you take in her troubles, and have given her your message. She was much touched by it, even to tears; and has begged me several times to tell you how much she appreciated it.

"I have not replied to you sooner, because I hoped to give you better tidings. Alas! it is quite the contrary. After a consultation of the physicians of Constance and Zurich with Dr. Conneau, her own physician, Professor Lisfranc, from Paris, was called in, on account of his skill, and also because he is the recognized authority with regard to the operation two of these gentlemen thought necessary.

"After a careful examination, the opinion of M. Lisfranc and that of the three other consulting physicians was, that the operation was impossible. They were unanimous in pronouncing an irrevocable sentence, and they

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Hortense receives letters from her son.

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have left us no hope in human resources. I still like to trust in the infinite goodness of God, whom I implore with earnest prayers.

"The mind of madame the duchess is as calm as one could expect in a position like hers. They told her that they would not perform the operation because it was not necessary, and because a mere treatment would suffice, with time and patience, to produce a perfect cure. She had been quite resigned to submit to the operation, showing a noble courage. Now she is happy in not being obliged to undergo it, and is filled with hope.

"In anticipation of the operation, of which, against my advice, she had been told a fortnight before M. Lisfranc came, she made her will and attended to the last duties of religion.

"On the 30th of March, an hour after she had partaken of the communion, she had the joy, which she looked upon as a divine favor, of receiving a large package from her son, the first since the departure from Lorient. His letter, which is very long, contains a relation of all he has done, all that has happened to him, and much that he has felt since he left Arenemberg, until he wrote, the 10th of January, on board the frigate Andromeda, lying in

Louis Napoleon returns to Arenenberg.

the harbor of Rio Janeiro, where he was not permitted to go on shore. He had on board M. de Chateaubriand's works, and re-read them during a frightful storm that lasted a fortnight, and allowed of no other occupation, and scarcely that. Pray tell this to M. de Chateaubriand, in recalling me personally to his kind remembrance.

"Think of me sometimes. Think of my painful position. To give to a person whom we love, and whom we are soon to lose, a care that is perfectly ineffectual; to seek to alleviate sharp and almost continual suffering, and only succeed very imperfectly; to wear a calm countenance when the heart is torn; to deceive, to try unceasingly to inspire hopes that we no longer cherish,—ah, believe me, this is frightful, and one would cheerfully give up life itself. Adieu, dear friend, you know how I love you."

Louis Napoleon, hastening to the bedside of his dying mother, took ship from New York for London. The hostility of the allied powers to him was such that it was with great difficulty he could reach Arenenberg. He arrived there just in time to receive the dying blessing of his mother and to close her eyes in death.

Death of Hortense.

Just before she died, Hortense assembled all her household in the dying chamber. She took each one affectionately by the hand and addressed to each one a few words of adieu. Her son, her devoted physician Dr. Conneau, and the ladies of her household, bathed in tears, were kneeling by her bedside. Her mind, in delirious dreams, had again been with the Emperor, sympathizing with him in the terrible tragedy of his fall. But now, as death drew near, reason was fully restored. "I have never," said she, "done wrong to any one. God will have mercy upon me." Conscious that the final moment had arrived, she made an effort to throw her arms around the neck of her son in a mother's last embrace, when she fell back upon her pillow dead. It was October 5, 1837.

The prince, with his own hands, closed his mother's eyes in that sleep which knows no earthly waking. He remained for some time upon his knees at her bedside, with his weeping eyes buried in his hands. At last he was led away from the precious remains from which it seemed impossible for him to separate himself. His home and his heart were indeed desolate. Motherless, with neither brother nor sister, his

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Action of the Government of Louis Philippe.

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aged and infirm father dying in Italy, where he could not be permitted to visit him, banished from his native land, jealously watched and menaced by all the allied powers, his fair name maligned, all these considerations seemed to fill his cup of sorrow to the brim.

It was the dying wish of Hortense that she might be buried by the side of Josephine, her mother, in the village church of Ruel, near Malmaison. The Government of Louis Philippe, which had closed the gates of France against Hortense while living, allowed her lifeless remains to sleep beneath her native soil. But the son was not permitted to follow his mother to her grave. It was feared that his appearance in France would rouse the enthusiasm of the masses; that they would rally around him, and, sweeping away the throne of Louis Philippe in a whirlwind of indignation, would re-establish the Empire. Madame Récamier, speaking of the death of Hortense, says:

"After the unfortunate attempt of Prince Louis, grief, anxiety and perhaps the loss of a last and secret hope, put an end to the turbulent existence of one who was little calculated to lead such a life of turmoil. France, closed to her living, was open to her dead, and she

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Burial of Hortense.

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was carried to Ruel and laid beside her mother. A funeral service was celebrated in her honor at the village church. All the relics of the Empire were there; among them the widow of Murat,\* who there witnessed the ceremony that shortly afterwards was to be performed over herself.

"It was winter. A thick snow covered the ground. The landscape was as silent and cold as the dead herself. I gave sincere tears to this woman so gracious and so kind; and I learned shortly afterwards that she had remembered me in her will. It is not without a profound and a religious emotion that we receive these remembrances from friends who are no more; these pledges of affection which come to you, so to say, from across the tomb, as if to assure you that thoughts of you had followed them as far as there. Judge, then, how touched I was in receiving the legacy destined for me—that light, elegant, and mysterious gift, chosen to recall to me unceasingly the tie that had existed between us. It was a lace veil, the one she wore the day of our meeting in St. Peter's."

In reference to the mother and the son, Julie de Marguerittes writes: "Louis Napoleon's

\* Caroline Bonaparte.

Louis Napoleon's love for his mother.

love for his mother had in it a tenderness and devotion even beyond that of a son. She had been his instructor and companion; and from the hour of her change of position she had manifested great and noble qualities, which the frivolity and prosperity of a court might forever have left unrevealed. Hortense was a woman to be loved and revered. And even at this distance of years, Napoleon's love for his mother has suffered no change. He has striven, in all ways, to associate her with his present high fortune. He has made an air of her composition, 'Partant pour la Syrie,' the national air of France. The ship which bore him from Marseilles to Genoa, on his Italian expedition, is called *La Reine Hortense*, after his mother."

Scarcely were the remains of Hortense committed to the tomb, ere the Swiss Government received an imperative command from the Government of Louis Philippe to banish Louis Napoleon from the soil of Switzerland. To save the country which had so kindly adopted him from war, the prince retired to London. He could have no hopes of regaining his rights as a French citizen until the Government of Louis Philippe should be overthrown. Another attempt was made at Boulogne in August,

Account of the escape from Ham.

1840. It proved a failure. Louis Napoleon was again arrested, tried, and condemned to imprisonment for life. Six years he passed in dreary captivity in the Castle of Ham. The following brief account of the wonderful escape of the prince is given in his own words, contained in a letter to the editor of the *Journal de la Somme*.

"MY DEAR M. DE GEORGE,—My desire to see my father once more in this world made me attempt the boldest enterprise I ever engaged in. It required more resolution and courage on my part than at Strasburg or Boulogne; for I was determined not to bear the ridicule that attaches to those who are arrested escaping under a disguise, and a failure I could not have endured. The following are the particulars of my escape:

"You know that the fort was guarded by four hundred men, who furnished daily sixty soldiers, placed as sentries outside the walls. Moreover, the principal gate of the prison was guarded by three jailers, two of whom were constantly on duty. It was necessary that I should first elude their vigilance, afterwards traverse the inside court before the windows of the commandant's residence, and arriving

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The escape from Ham.

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there, I should be obliged to pass by a gate which was guarded by soldiers.

“Not wishing to communicate my design to any one, it was necessary to disguise myself. As several of the rooms in the building I occupied were undergoing repairs, it was not difficult to assume the dress of a workman. My good and faithful valet, Charles Thelin, procured a smock-frock and a pair of wooden shoes, and after shaving off my mustaches I took a plank upon my shoulders.

“On Monday morning I saw the workmen enter at half-past eight o'clock. Charles took them some drink, in order that I should not meet any of them on my passage. He was also to call one of the turnkeys while De Conneau conversed with the others. Nevertheless I had scarcely got out of my room before I was accosted by a workman who took me for one of his comrades; and at the bottom of the stairs I found myself in front of the keeper. Fortunately, I placed the plank I was carrying before my face, and succeeded in reaching the yard. Whenever I passed a sentinel or any other person I always kept the plank before my face.

“Passing before the first sentinel, I let my

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The escape from Ham.

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pipe fall and stopped to pick up the bits. There I met the officer on duty; but as he was reading a letter he did not pay attention to me. The soldiers at the guard-house appeared surprised at my dress, and a drummer turned around several times to look at me. I placed the plank before my face, but they appeared to be so curious that I thought I should never escape them until I heard them cry, ‘Oh, it is Bernard!’

“Once outside, I walked quickly towards the road of St. Quentin. Charles, who the day before had engaged a carriage, shortly overtook me, and we arrived at St. Quentin. I passed through the town on foot, after having thrown off my smock-frock. Charles procured a post-chaise, under pretext of going to Cambrai. We arrived without meeting with any hindrance at Valenciennes, where I took the railway. I had procured a Belgian passport, but nowhere was I asked to show it.

“During my escape, Dr. Conneau, always so devoted to me, remained in prison, and caused them to believe that I was ill, in order to give me time to reach the frontier. It was necessary to be convinced that the Government would never set me at liberty if I would not