Napoleon the Little

By

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NAPOLEON THE LITTLE

BOOK I

I

DECEMBER 20, 1848

On Thursday, December 20, 1848, the Constituent Assembly, being in session, surrounded at that moment by an imposing display of troops, heard the report of the Representative Waldeck-Rousseau, read on behalf of the committee which had been appointed to scrutinize the votes in the election of President of the Republic; a report in which general attention had marked this phrase, which embodied its whole idea: "It is the seal of its inviolable authority which the nation, by this admirable application of the fundamental law, itself affixes on the Constitution, to render it sacred and inviolable." Amid the profound silence of the nine hundred representatives, of whom almost the entire number was assembled, the President of the National Constituent Assembly, Armaud Marrast, rose and said:--

"In the name of the French people,

"Whereas Citizen Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, born at Paris, fulfils the conditions of eligibility prescribed by Article 44 of the

Constitution;

"Whereas in the ballot cast throughout the extent of the territory of the Republic, for the election of President, he has received an absolute majority of votes;

"By virtue of Articles 47 and 48 of the Constitution, the National Assembly proclaims him President of the Republic from this present day until the second Sunday in May, 1852."

There was a general movement on all the benches, and in the galleries filled with the public; the President of the Constituent Assembly added:

"According to the terms of the decree, I invite the Citizen President of the Republic to ascend the tribune, and to take the oath."

The representatives who crowded the right lobby returned to their places and left the passage free. It was about four in the afternoon, it was growing dark, and the immense hall of the Assembly having become involved in gloom, the chandeliers were lowered from the ceiling, and the messengers placed lamps on the tribune. The President made a sign, the door on the right opened, and there was seen to enter the hall, and rapidly ascend the tribune, a man still young, attired in black, having on his breast the badge and riband of the Legion of Honour.

All eyes were turned towards this man. A pallid face, its bony emaciated angles thrown into bold relief by the shaded lamps, a nose large and long, moustaches, a curled lock of hair above a narrow forehead, eyes small and dull, and with a timid and uneasy manner, bearing no resemblance to the Emperor,--this man was Citizen Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte.

During the murmurs which greeted his entrance, he remained for some instants, his right hand in the breast of his buttoned coat, erect and motionless on the tribune, the pediment of which bore these dates: February 22, 23, 24; and above which were inscribed these three words: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

Before being elected President of the Republic, Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte had been a representative of the people for several months, and though he had rarely attended a whole sitting, he had been frequently seen in the seat he had selected, on the upper benches of the Left, in the fifth row in the zone commonly called the Mountain, behind his old preceptor, Representative Vieillard. This man, then, was no new figure in the Assembly, yet his entrance on this occasion produced a profound sensation. It was to all, to his friends as to his foes, the future that entered, an unknown future. Amid the immense murmur, produced by the whispered words of all present, his name passed from mouth to mouth, coupled with most diverse opinions. His antagonists detailed his adventures, his coups-de-main, Strasburg, Boulogne, the tame eagle, and the piece of meat in the little hat. His

friends dwelt upon his exile, his proscription, his imprisonment, an excellent work of his on the artillery, his writings at Ham, which were marked, to a certain degree, with the liberal, democratic, and socialistic spirit, the maturity of the more sober age at which he had now arrived; and to those who recalled his follies, they recalled his misfortunes.

General Cavaignac, who, not having been elected President, had just resigned his power into the hands of the Assembly, with that tranquil laconism which befits republics, was seated in his customary place at the head of the ministerial bench, on the left of the tribune, and observed in silence, with folded arms, this installation of the new man.

At length silence was restored, the President of the Assembly struck the table before him several times with his wooden knife, and then, the last murmurs having subsided, said:

"I will now read the form of the oath."

There was something almost religious about that moment. The Assembly was no longer an Assembly, it was a temple. The immense significance of the oath was rendered still more impressive by the circumstance that it was the only oath taken throughout the whole territory of the Republic. February had, and rightly, abolished the political oath, and the Constitution had, as rightly, retained only the oath of the President.

This oath possessed the double character of necessity and of grandeur. It was an oath taken by the executive, the subordinate power, to the legislative, the superior power; it was even more than this--in contrast to the monarchical fiction by which the people take the oath to the man invested with power, it was the man invested with power who took the oath to the people. The President, functionary and servant, swore fidelity to the sovereign people. Bending before the national majesty, manifest in the omnipotent Assembly, he received from the Assembly the Constitution, and swore obedience to it. The representatives were inviolable, and he was not. We repeat it: a citizen responsible to all the citizens, he was, of the whole nation, the only man so bound. Hence, in this oath, sole and supreme, there was a solemnity which went to the heart. He who writes these lines was present in his place in the Assembly, on the day this oath was taken; he is one of those who, in the face of the civilized world called to bear witness, received this oath in the name of the people, and who have it still in their hands. Thus it runs:--

"In presence of God, and before the French people, represented by the National Assembly, I swear to remain faithful to the democratic republic, one and indivisible, and to fulfil all the duties imposed upon me by the Constitution."

The President of the Assembly, standing, read this majestic formula; then, before the whole Assembly, breathlessly silent and attentive, intensely expectant, Citizen Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, raising

his right hand, said, in a firm, loud voice:

"I swear it!"

Representative Boulay (de la Meurthe), since Vice-President of the Republic, who had known Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte from his childhood, exclaimed: "He is an honest man, he will keep his oath."

The President of the Assembly, still standing, proceeded thus (I quote verbatim the words recorded in the Moniteur): "We call God and man to witness the oath which has just been sworn. The National Assembly receives that oath, orders it to be transcribed upon its records, printed in the Moniteur, and published in the same manner as legislative acts."

It seemed that the ceremony was now at an end, and we imagined that Citizen Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, thenceforth, until the second Sunday in May, 1852, President of the Republic, would descend from the tribune. But he did not; he felt a magnanimous impulse to bind himself still more rigorously, if possible; to add something to the oath which the Constitution demanded from him, in order to show how largely the oath was free and spontaneous. He asked permission to address the Assembly. "You have the floor," said the President of the Assembly.

There was more profound silence, and closer attention than before.

Citizen Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte unfolded a paper and read a speech. In this speech, having announced and installed the ministry appointed by him, he said:--

"I desire, in common with yourselves, citizen representatives, to consolidate society upon its true basis, to establish democratic institutions, and earnestly to seek every means calculated to relieve the sufferings of the generous and intelligent people who have just bestowed on me so signal a proof of their confidence."[1]

[1] "Hear! Hear!"--Moniteur.

He then thanked his predecessor in the executive power, the same man who, later, was able to say these noble words: "I did not fall from power, I descended from it;" and he glorified him in these terms:--

"The new administration, in entering upon its duties, is bound to thank that which preceded it for the efforts it has made to transmit the executive power intact, and to maintain public tranquillity.[2]

[2] "Murmurs of assent."--Moniteur.

"The conduct of the Honourable General Cavaignac has been worthy of the manliness of his character, and of that sentiment of duty which is the first quality requisite in the chief of the State."[3]

[3] "Renewed murmurs of assent."--Moniteur.

The Assembly cheered these words, but that which especially struck every mind, which was profoundly graven in every memory, which found its echo in every honest heart, was the declaration, the wholly spontaneous declaration, we repeat, with which he began his address.

"The suffrages of the nation, and the oath I have just taken, command my future conduct. My duty is clearly marked. I will fulfil it as a man of honour.

"I shall regard as the enemies of the country all who seek to change, by illegal means, that which all France has established."

When he had done speaking, the Constituent Assembly rose, and uttered as with a single voice, the exclamation: "Long live the Republic!"

Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte descended from the tribune, went up to General Cavaignac, and offered him his hand. The general, for a few instants, hesitated to accept the grasp. All who had just heard the words of Louis Bonaparte, pronounced in a tone so instinct with good faith, blamed the general for his hesitation.

The Constitution to which Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte took oath on December 20, 1848, "in the face of God and man," contained, among other articles, these:--

"Article 36. The representatives of the people are inviolable.

"Article 37. They may not be arrested on a criminal charge unless taken in the fact, or prosecuted without the permission of the Assembly first obtained.

"Article 68. Every act by which the President of the Republic dissolves the National Assembly, prorogues it, or impedes the execution of its decrees, is high treason.

"By such act, of itself, the President forfeits his office, the citizens are bound to refuse him obedience, and the executive power passes, of absolute right, to the National Assembly. The judges of the Supreme Court shall thereupon immediately assemble, under penalty of forfeiture; they shall convoke the jurors in such place as they shall appoint, to proceed to the trial of the President and his accomplices; and they shall themselves appoint magistrates who shall proceed to execute the functions of the ministry."

In less than three years after this memorable day, on the 2nd of December, 1851, at daybreak, there might be read on all the street corners in Paris, this placard:--

"In the name of the French people, the President of the Republic:

"Decrees--

"Article 1. The National Assembly is dissolved.

"Article 2. Universal suffrage is re-established. The law of the 31st of May is repealed.

"Article 3. The French people are convoked in their comitia.

"Article 4. A state of siege is decreed throughout the first military division.

"Article 5. The Council of State is dissolved.

"Article 6. The Minister of the Interior is charged with the execution of this decree.

"Done at the Palace of the Élysée, December 2, 1851.

"LOUIS-NAPOLEON BONAPARTE."

At the same time Paris learned that fifteen of the inviolable representatives of the people had been arrested in their homes, during the night, by order of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte.

II

MISSION OF THE REPRESENTATIVES

Those who, as representatives of the people, received, in trust for the people, the oath of the 20th of December, 1848, those, especially who, being twice invested with the confidence of the nation, had as representatives heard that oath sworn, and as legislators had seen it violated, had assumed, with their writ of summons, two duties. The first of these was, on the day when that oath should be violated, to rise in their places, to present their breasts to the enemy, without calculating either his numbers or his strength, to shelter with their bodies the sovereignty of the people and as a means to combat and cast down the usurper, to grasp every sort of weapon, from the law found in the code, to the paving stone that one picks up in the street. The second duty was, after having accepted the combat and all its chances to accept proscription and all its miseries, to stand eternally erect before the traitor, his oath in their hands, to forget their personal sufferings, their private sorrows, their families dispersed and maltreated, their fortunes destroyed, their affections crushed, their bleeding hearts; to forget themselves, and to feel thenceforth but a single wound--the wound of France to cry aloud for justice; never to suffer themselves to be appeased, never to relent, but to be implacable; to seize the despicable perjurer, crowned though he were, if not with the hand of the law, at least with the pincers of truth,

and to heat red-hot in the fire of history all the letters of his oath, and brand them on his face.

He who writes these lines is one of those who did not shrink, on the 2nd of December, from the utmost effort to accomplish the first of these two great duties; in publishing this book he performs the second.

III

NOTICE OF EXPIRATION OF TERM

It is time that the human conscience should awaken.

Ever since the 2nd of December, 1851, a successful ambush, a crime, odious, repulsive, infamous, unprecedented, considering the age in which it was committed, has triumphed and held sway, erecting itself into a theory, pluming itself in the sunlight, making laws, issuing decrees, taking society, religion, and the family under its protection, holding out its hand to the kings of Europe, who accept it, and calling them, "my brother," or "my cousin." This crime no one disputes, not even those who profit by it and live by it; they say simply that it was necessary; not even he who committed it, who says merely that he, the criminal, has been "absolved." This crime contains within itself all crimes, treachery in the conception, perjury in the execution, murder and assassination in the struggle, spoliation, swindling, and robbery in the triumph; this crime draws after it as integral parts of itself, suppression of the laws, violation of constitutional inviolabilities, arbitrary sequestration, confiscation of property, midnight massacres, secret military executions, commissions superseding tribunals, ten thousand citizens banished, forty thousand citizens proscribed, sixty thousand families ruined and despairing. These things are patent. Even so! it is painful to say it, but there is silence concerning this

crime; it is there, men see it, touch it, and pass on to their business; shops are opened, the stock jobbers job, Commerce, seated on her packages, rubs her hands, and the moment is close at hand when everybody will regard all that has taken place as a matter of course. He who measures cloth does not hear the yard-stick in his hand speak to him and say: "'Tis a false measure that governs." He who weighs out a commodity does not hear his scales raise their voice and say: "'Tis a false weight that reigns." A strange order of things surely, that has for its base supreme disorder, the negation of all law! equilibrium resting on iniquity!

Let us add,--what, for that matter is self-evident,--that the author of this crime is a malefactor of the most cynical and lowest description.

At this moment, let all who wear a robe, a scarf, or a uniform; let all those who serve this man, know, if they think themselves the agents of a power, that they deceive themselves; they are the shipmates of a pirate. Ever since the 2nd of December there have been no office-holders in France, there have been only accomplices. The moment has come when every one must take careful account of what he has done, of what he is continuing to do. The gendarmes who arrested those whom the man of Strasburg and Boulogne called "insurgents," arrested the guardians of the Constitution. The judge who tried the combatants of Paris or the provinces, placed in the dock the mainstays of the law. The officer who confined in the hulks the "condemned men," confined the defenders of the Republic and of the State. The general in Africa who

imprisoned at Lambassa the transported men bending beneath the sun's fierce heat, shivering with fever, digging in the sun-baked soil a furrow destined to be their grave, that general sequestrated, tortured, assassinated the men of the law. All, generals, officers, gendarmes, judges, are absolutely under forfeiture. They have before them more than innocent men,--heroes! more than victims,--martyrs!

Let them know this, therefore, and let them hasten to act upon the knowledge; let them, at least, break the fetters, draw the bolts, empty the hulks, throw open the jails, since they have not still the courage to grasp the sword. Up, consciences, awake, it is full time!

If law, right, duty, reason, common sense, equity, justice, suffice not, let them think of the future! If remorse is mute, let responsibility speak!

And let all those who, being landed proprietors, shake the magistrate by the hand; who, being bankers, fête a general; who, being peasants, salute a gendarme; let all those who do not shun the hôtel in which dwells the minister, the house in which dwells the prefect, as he would shun a lazaretto; let all those who, being simple citizens, not functionaries, go to the balls and the banquets of Louis Bonaparte and see not that the black flag waves over the Élysée,--let all these in like manner know that this sort of shame is contagious; if they avoid material complicity, they will not avoid moral complicity.

The crime of the 2nd of December bespatters them.

The present situation, that seems so calm to the unthinking, is most threatening, be sure of that. When public morality is under eclipse, an appalling shadow settles down upon social order.

All guarantees take wing, all supports vanish.

Thenceforth there is not in France a tribunal, nor a court, nor a judge, to render justice and pronounce a sentence, on any subject, against any one, in the name of any one.

Bring before the assizes a malefactor of any sort: the thief will say to the judges: "The chief of the State robbed the Bank of twenty-five millions;" the false witness will say to the judges: "The chief of the State took an oath in the face of God and of man, and that oath he has violated;" the sequestrator will say: "The chief of the State has arrested, and detained against all law, the representatives of the sovereign people;" the swindler will say: "The chief of the State got his election, got power, got the Tuileries, all by swindling;" the forger will say: "The chief of the State forged votes;" the footpad will say: "The chief of the State stole their purses from the Princes of Orleans;" the murderer will say: "The chief of the State shot, sabred, bayonetted, massacred passengers in the streets;" and all together, swindler, forger, false witness, footpad, robber, assassin, will add: "And you judges, you have been to salute this man, to praise

him for having perjured himself, to compliment him for committing forgery, to praise him for stealing and swindling, to thank him for murdering! what do you want of us?"

Assuredly, this is a very serious state of things! to sleep in such a situation, is additional ignominy.

It is time, we repeat, that this monstrous slumber of men's consciences should end. It must not be, after that fearful scandal, the triumph of crime, that a scandal still more fearful should be presented to mankind: the indifference of the civilized world.

If that were to be, history would appear one day as an avenger; and from this very hour, as the wounded lion takes refuge in the solitudes, the just man, veiling his face in presence of this universal degradation, would take refuge in the immensity of public contempt.

IV

MEN WILL AWAKEN

But it is not to be; men will awaken.

The present book has for its sole aim to arouse the sleepers. France must not even adhere to this government with the assent of lethargy; at certain hours, in certain places, under certain shadows, to sleep is to die.

Let us add that at this moment, France--strange to say, but none the less true--knows not what took place on the 2nd of December and subsequently, or knows it imperfectly; and this is her excuse. However, thanks to several generous and courageous publications, the facts are beginning to creep out. This book is intended to bring some of those facts forward, and, if it please God, to present them in their true light. It is important that people should know who and what this M. Bonaparte is. At the present moment, thanks to the suppression of the platform, thanks to the suppression of the press, thanks to the suppression of speech, of liberty, and of truth,--a suppression which has had for one result the permitting M. Bonaparte to do everything, but which has had at the same time the effect of nullifying all his measures without exception, including the indescribable ballot of the 20th of December,--thanks, we say, to this stifling of all complaints

and of all light, no man, no fact wears its true aspect or bears its true name. M. Bonaparte's crime is not a crime, it is called a necessity; M. Bonaparte's ambuscade is not an ambuscade, it is called a defence of public order; M. Bonaparte's robberies are not robberies, they are called measures of state; M. Bonaparte's murders are not murders, they are called public safety; M. Bonaparte's accomplices are not malefactors, they are called magistrates, senators, and councillors of state; M. Bonaparte's adversaries are not the soldiers of the law and of right, they are called Jacquerie, demagogues, communists. In the eyes of France, in the eyes of Europe, the 2nd of December is still masked. This book is a hand issuing from the darkness, and tearing that mask away.

Now, we propose to scrutinize this triumph of order, to depict this government so vigorous, so firm, so well-based, so strong, having on its side a crowd of paltry youths, who have more ambition than boots, dandies and beggars; sustained on the Bourse by Fould the Jew, and in the Church by Montalembert the Catholic; esteemed by women who would fain pass for maids, by men who want to be prefects; resting on a coalition of prostitutions; giving fêtes; making cardinals; wearing white neck-cloths and yellow kid gloves, like Morny, newly varnished like Maupas, freshly brushed like Persigny,--rich, elegant, clean, gilded, joyous, and born in a pool of blood!

Yes, men will awaken!

Yes, men will arouse from that torpor which, to such a people, is shame; and when France does awaken, when she does open her eyes, when she does distinguish, when she does see that which is before her and beside her, she will recoil with a terrible shudder from the monstrous crime which dared to espouse her in the darkness, and of which she has shared the bed.

Then will the supreme hour strike!

The sceptics smile and insist; they say:

"Hope for nothing. This government, you say, is the shame of France. Be it so, but this same shame is quoted on the Bourse. Hope for nothing. You are poets and dreamers if you hope. Why, look about you: the tribune, the press, intelligence, speech, thought, all that was liberty, has vanished. Yesterday, these things were in motion, alive; to-day, they are petrified. Well, people are satisfied with this petrification, they accommodate themselves to it, make the most of it, conduct business on it, and live as usual. Society goes on, and plenty of worthy folk are well pleased with this state of things. Why do you want to change it, to put an end to it? Don't deceive yourselves, it is all solid, all firm; it is the present and the future."

We are in Russia. The Neva is frozen over. Houses are built on the ice, and heavy chariots roll over it. It is no longer water, but rock. The people go to and fro upon this marble which was once a river. A town is

run up, streets are marked out, shops opened; people buy, sell, eat, drink, sleep, light fires on what once was water. You can do whatever you please there. Fear nothing. Laugh, dance; it is more solid than terra firma. Why, it rings beneath the foot, like granite. Long live winter! Long live the ice! This will last till doomsday! And look at the sky: is it day? is it night? what is it? A pale, misty light steals over the snow; one would say that the sun is dying!

No, thou art not dying, O liberty! One of these days, at the moment when thou art least expected, at the very hour when they shall have most utterly forgotten thee, thou wilt rise!--O dazzling vision! the star-like face will suddenly be seen issuing from the earth, resplendent on the horizon! Over all that snow, over all that ice, over that hard, white plain, over that water become rock, over all that wretched winter, thou wilt cast thy arrow of gold, thy ardent and effulgent ray! light, heat, life! And then, listen! hear you that dull sound? hear you that crashing noise, all-pervading and formidable? 'Tis the breaking up of the ice! 'tis the melting of the Neva! 'tis the river resuming its course! 'tis the water, living, joyous, and terrible, heaving up the hideous, dead ice, and crushing it.--'Twas granite, said you; see, it splinters like glass! 'tis the breaking up of the ice, I tell you: 'tis the truth returning, 'tis progress recommencing, 'tis mankind resuming its march, and uprooting, carrying off, mingling, crushing and drowning in its waves, like the wretched furniture of a submerged hovel, not only the brand-new empire of Louis Bonaparte, but all the structures and all the work of the eternal

antique despotism! Look on these things as they are passing. They are vanishing for ever. You will never behold them again. That book, half submerged, is the old code of iniquity; that sinking framework is the throne; that other framework, floating off, is the scaffold!

And for this immense engulfment, this supreme victory of life over death, what was needed? One glance from thee, O sun! one of thy rays, O liberty!

V

BIOGRAPHY

Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, born at Paris, on April 20, 1808, is the son of Hortense de Beauharnais, who was married by the Emperor to Louis-Napoleon, King of Holland. In 1831, taking part in the insurrections in Italy, where his elder brother was killed, Louis Bonaparte attempted to overthrow the Papacy. On the 30th of October, 1836, he attempted to overthrow Louis Philippe. He failed at Strasburg, and, being pardoned by the King, he embarked for America, leaving his accomplices behind him to be tried. On the 11th of November he wrote: "The King, in his clemency, has ordered me taken to America;" he declared himself "keenly affected by the King's generosity," adding: "Certainly, we were all culpable towards the government in taking up arms against it, but the greatest culprit was myself;" and he concluded thus: "I was guilty towards the government, and the government has been generous to me."[1] He returned from America, and went to Switzerland, got himself appointed captain of artillery at Berne, and a citizen of Salenstein, in Thurgovia; equally avoiding, amid the diplomatic complications occasioned by his presence, to call himself a Frenchman, or to avow himself a Swiss, and contenting himself, in order to satisfy the French government, with stating in a letter, dated the 20th of August, 1838, that he lived "almost alone," in the house "where his mother died," and that it was "his firm

determination to remain quiet."

[1] A letter read at the Court of Assize by the advocate Parquin, who, after reading it, exclaimed: "Among the numerous faults of Louis-Napoleon, we may not, at least, include ingratitude."

On the 6th of August, 1840 he disembarked at Boulogne, parodying the disembarkation at Cannes, with the petit chapeau on his head,[2] carrying a gilt eagle on the end of a flag-staff, and a live eagle in a cage, proclamations galore, and sixty valets, cooks, and grooms, disguised as French soldiers with uniforms bought at the Temple, and buttons of the 42nd Regiment of the Line, made in London. He scatters money among the passers-by in the streets of Boulogne, sticks his hat on the point of his sword, and himself cries, "Vive l'Empereur!" fires a pistol shot at an officer,[3] which hits a soldier and knocks out three of his teeth, and finally runs away. He is taken into custody; there are found on his person 500,000 francs, in gold and bank-notes;[4] the procureur-general, Franck-Carrè, says to him in the Court of Peers: "You have been tampering with the soldiers, and distributing money to purchase treason." The peers sentenced him to perpetual imprisonment. He was confined at Ham. There his mind seemed to take refuge within itself and to mature: he wrote and published some books, instinct, notwithstanding a certain ignorance of France and of the age, with democracy and with progress: "The Extinction of Pauperism," "An Analysis of the Sugar Question," "Napoleonic Ideas," in which he made the Emperor a "humanitarian." In a treatise entitled

"Historical Fragments," he wrote thus: "I am a citizen before I am a Bonaparte." Already in 1852, in his book "Political Reveries," he had declared himself a republican. After five years of captivity, he escaped from the prison of Ham, disguised as a mason, and took refuge in England.

[2] Court of Peers. Attempt of the 6th August, 1840, page 140, evidence of Geoffroy, grenadier.

[3] Captain Col. Puygellier, who had said to him: "You are a conspirator and a traitor."

[4] Court of Peers. Evidence of the witness Adam, Mayor of Boulogne.

February arrived; he hailed the Republic, took his seat as a representative of the people in the Constituent Assembly, mounted the tribune on the 21st of September, 1848, and said: "All my life shall be devoted to strengthening the Republic;" published a manifesto which may be summed up in two lines: liberty, progress, democracy, amnesty, abolition of the decrees of proscription and banishment; was elected President by 5,500,000 votes, solemnly swore allegiance to the Constitution on the 20th of December, 1848, and on the 2nd of December, 1851, shattered that Constitution. In the interval he had destroyed the Roman republic, and had restored in 1849 that Papacy which in 1831 he had essayed to overthrow. He had, besides, taken nobody knows how

great a share in the obscure affair of the lottery of the gold ingots. A few weeks previous to the coup d'état, this bag of gold became transparent, and there was visible within it a hand greatly resembling his. On December 2, and the following days, he, the executive power, assailed the legislative power, arrested the representatives, drove out the assembly, dissolved the Council of State, expelled the high court of justice, suppressed the laws, took 25,000,000 francs from the bank, gorged the army with gold, swept the streets of Paris with grape-shot, and terrorized France. Since then, he has proscribed eighty-four representatives of the people; stolen from the Princes of Orleans the property of their father, Louis Philippe, to whom he owed his life; decreed despotism in fifty-eight articles, under the name of Constitution; throttled the Republic; made the sword of France a gag in the mouth of liberty; pawned the railways; picked the pockets of the people; regulated the budget by ukase; transported to Africa and Cayenne ten thousand democrats; banished to Belgium, Spain, Piedmont, Switzerland, and England forty thousand republicans, brought grief to every heart and the blush of shame to every brow.

Louis Bonaparte thinks that he is mounting the steps of a throne; he does not perceive that he is mounting those of a scaffold.

VI

PORTRAIT

Louis Bonaparte is a man of middle height, cold, pale, slow in his movements, having the air of a person not quite awake. He has published, as we have mentioned before, a moderately esteemed treatise on artillery, and is thought to be acquainted with the handling of cannon. He is a good horseman. He speaks drawlingly, with a slight German accent. His histrionic abilities were displayed at the Eglinton tournament. He has a heavy moustache, covering his smile, like that of the Duke of Alva, and a lifeless eye like that of Charles IX.

Judging him apart from what he calls his "necessary acts," or his "great deeds," he is a vulgar, commonplace personage, puerile, theatrical, and vain. Those persons who are invited to St. Cloud, in the summer, receive with the invitation an order to bring a morning toilette and an evening toilette. He loves finery, display, feathers, embroidery, tinsel and spangles, big words, and grand titles,--everything that makes a noise and glitter, all the glassware of power. In his capacity of cousin to the battle of Austerlitz, he dresses as a general. He cares little about being despised; he contents himself with the appearance of respect.

This man would tarnish the background of history; he absolutely sullies

its foreground. Europe smiled when, glancing at Haiti, she saw this white Soulouque appear. But there is now in Europe, in every intelligent mind, abroad as at home, a profound stupor, a feeling, as it were, of personal insult; for the European continent, whether it will or no, is responsible for France, and whatever abases France humiliates Europe.

Before the 2nd of December, the leaders of the Right used freely to say of Louis Bonaparte: "He is an idiot." They were mistaken. To be sure that brain of his is awry, and has gaps in it, but one can discern here and there thoughts consecutive and concatenate. It is a book whence pages have been torn. Louis Napoleon has a fixed idea; but a fixed idea is not idiocy; he knows what he wants, and he goes straight to it; through justice, through law, through reason, through honour, through humanity, it may be, but straight on none the less.

He is not an idiot. He is a man of another age than our own. He seems absurd and mad, because he is out of his place and time. Transport him to Spain in the 16th century, and Philip II would recognise him; to England, and Henry VIII would smile on him; to Italy, and Cæsar Borgia would jump on his neck. Or even, confine yourself to setting him outside the pale of European civilization,--place him, in 1817, at Janina, and Ali-Tepeleni would grasp him by the hand.

There is in him something of the Middle Ages, and of the Lower Empire. That which he does would have seemed perfectly simple and natural to

Michael Ducas, to Romanus Diogenes, to Nicephorus Botoniates, to the Eunuch Narses, to the Vandal Stilico, to Mahomet II, to Alexander VI, to Ezzelino of Padua, as it seems perfectly simple and natural to himself. But he forgets, or knows not, that in the age wherein we live, his actions will have to traverse the great streams of human morality, set free by three centuries of literature and by the French Revolution; and that in this medium, his actions will wear their true aspect, and appear what they really are--hideous.

His partisans--he has some--complacently compare him with his uncle, the first Bonaparte. They say: "The one accomplished the 18th Brumaire, the other the 2nd of December: they are two ambitious men." The first Bonaparte aimed to reconstruct the Empire of the West, to make Europe his vassal, to dominate the continent by his power, and to dazzle it by his grandeur; to take an arm-chair himself, and give footstools to the kings; to cause history to say: "Nimrod, Cyrus, Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon;" to be a master of the world. And so he was. It was for that that he accomplished the 18th Brumaire. This fellow would fain have horses and women, be called Monseigneur, and live luxuriously. It was for this that he accomplished the 2nd of December. Yes: they are both ambitious; the comparison is just.

Let us add, that, like the first Bonaparte, the second also aims to be emperor. But that which somewhat impairs the force of the comparison is, that there is perhaps, a slight difference between conquering an empire and pilfering it.

However this may be, that which is certain and which cannot be veiled, even by the dazzling curtain of glory and of misfortune on which are inscribed: Arcola, Lodi, the Pyramids, Eylau, Friedland, St. Helena--that which is certain, we repeat, is that the 18th Brumaire was a crime, of which the 2nd of December has aggravated the stain on the memory of Napoleon.

M. Louis Bonaparte does not object to have it whispered that he is a socialist. He feels that this gives him a sort of vague field which ambition may exploit. As we have already said, when he was in prison, he passed his time in acquiring a quasi-reputation as a democrat. One fact will describe him. When, being at Ham, he published his book "On the Extinction of Pauperism," a book having apparently for its sole and exclusive aim, to probe the wound of the poverty of the common people, and to suggest the remedy, he sent the book to one of his friends with this note, which we have ourselves seen: "Read this book on pauperism, and tell me if you think it is calculated to do me good."

The great talent of M. Louis Bonaparte is silence. Before the 2nd of December, he had a council of ministers who, being responsible, imagined that they were of some consequence. The President presided. Never, or scarcely ever, did he take part in their discussions. While MM. Odillon Barrot, Passy, Tocqueville, Dufaure, or Faucher were speaking, he occupied himself, says one of these ministers, in constructing, with intense earnestness, paper dolls, or in drawing

men's heads on the documents before him.

To feign death, that is his art. He remains mute and motionless, looking in the opposite direction from his object, until the hour for action comes; then he turns his head, and leaps upon his prey. His policy appears to you abruptly, at some unexpected turning, pistol in hand, like a thief. Up to that point, there is the least possible movement. For one moment, in the course of the three years that have just passed, he was seen face to face with Changarnier, who also, on his part, had a scheme in view. "Ibant obscuri," as Virgil says. France observed, with a certain anxiety, these two men. What was in their minds? Did not the one dream of Cromwell, the other of Monk? Men asked one another these questions as they looked on the two men. In both of them, there was the same attitude of mystery, the same policy of immobility. Bonaparte said not a word, Changarnier made not a gesture; this one did not stir, that one did not breathe; they seemed to be playing the game of which should be the most statuesque.

This silence of his, Louis Bonaparte sometimes breaks; but then he does not speak, he lies. This man lies as other men breathe. He announces an honest intention; be on your guard: he makes an assertion, distrust him: he takes an oath, tremble.

Machiavel made small men; Louis Bonaparte is one of them.

To announce an enormity against which the world protests, to disavow it

with indignation, to swear by all the gods, to declare himself an honest man,--and then, at the moment when people are reassured, and laugh at the enormity in question, to execute it. This was his course with respect to the coup d'état, with respect to the decrees of proscription, with respect to the spoliation of the Princes of Orleans;--and so it will be with the invasion of Belgium, and of Switzerland, and with everything else. It is his way; you may think what you please of it; he employs it; he finds it effective; it is his affair. He will have to settle the matter with history.

You are of his familiar circle; he hints at a project, which seems to you, not immoral,--one does not scrutinize so closely,--but insane and dangerous, and dangerous to himself; you raise objections; he listens, makes no reply, sometimes gives way for a day or two, then resumes his project, and carries out his will.

There is in his table, in his office at the Élysée, a drawer, frequently half open. He takes thence a paper; reads it to a minister; it is a decree. The minister assents or dissents. If he dissents, Louis Bonaparte throws the paper back into the drawer, where there are many other papers, the dreams of an omnipotent man, shuts the drawer, takes out the key, and leaves the room without saying a word. The minister bows and retires, delighted with the deference which has been paid to his opinion. Next morning the decree is in the Moniteur.

Sometimes with the minister's signature.

Thanks to this modus operandi, he has always in his service the unforeseen, a mighty weapon, and encountering in himself no internal obstacle in that which is known to other men as conscience, he pursues his design, through no matter what, no matter how, and attains his goal.

He draws back sometimes, not before the moral effect of his acts, but before their material effect. The decrees of expulsion of eighty-four representatives of the people, published on January 6 in the Moniteur, revolted public sentiment. Fast bound as France was, the shudder was perceptible. The 2nd of December was not long past; there was danger in popular excitement. Louis Bonaparte understood this. Next day a second decree of expulsion was to have appeared, containing eight hundred names. Louis Bonaparte had the proof brought to him from the Moniteur; the list occupied fourteen columns of the official journal. He crumpled the proof, threw it into the fire, and the decree did not appear. The proscriptions proceeded without a decree.

In his enterprises, he needs aids and collaborators; he needs what he calls "men." Diogenes sought them with a lantern, he seeks them with a banknote in his hand. And finds them. There are certain sides of human nature which produce a particular species of persons, of whom he is the centre, and who group around him ex necessitate, in obedience to that mysterious law of gravitation which regulates the moral being no

less than the cosmic atom. To undertake "the act of the 2nd of December,"--to execute it, and to complete it, he needed these men, and he had them. Now he is surrounded by them; these men form his retinue, his court, mingling their radiance with his. At certain epochs of history, there are pleiades of great men; at other epochs, there are pleiades of vagabonds.

But do not confound the epoch, the moment of Louis Bonaparte, with the 19th century: the toadstool sprouts at the foot of the oak, but it is not the oak.

M. Louis Bonaparte has succeeded. He has with him henceforth money, speculation, the Bourse, the Bank, the counting-room, the strong-box, and all those men who pass so readily from one side to the other, when all they have to straddle is shame. He made of M. Changarnier a dupe, of M. Thiers a stop-gap, of M. de Montalembert an accomplice, of power a cavern, of the budget his farm. They are coining at the Mint a medal, called the medal of the 2nd of December, in honour of the manner in which he keeps his oaths. The frigate La Constitution has been debaptized, and is now called L'Élysée. He can, when he chooses, be crowned by M. Sibour,[1] and exchange the couch of the Élysée for the state bed of the Tuileries. Meanwhile, for the last seven months, he has been displaying himself; he has harangued, triumphed, presided at banquets, given balls, danced, reigned, turned himself about in all directions; he has paraded himself, in all his ugliness, in a box at the Opéra; he has had himself dubbed Prince-President; he has

distributed standards to the army, and crosses of honour to the commissioners of police. When there was occasion to select a symbol, he effaced himself and chose the eagle; modesty of a sparrow-hawk!

[1] The Archbishop of Paris.

VII

IN CONTINUATION OF THE PANEGYRICS

He has succeeded. The result is that he has plenty of apotheoses. Of panegyrists he has more than Trajan. One thing, however, has struck me, which is, that among all the qualities that have been discovered in him since the 2nd of December, among all the eulogies that have been addressed to him, there is not one word outside of this circle: adroitness, coolness, daring, address, an affair admirably prepared and conducted, moment well chosen, secret well kept, measures well taken. False keys well made--that's the whole story. When these things have been said, all has been said, except a phrase or two about "clemency;" and yet no one extols the magnanimity of Mandrin, who, sometimes, did not take all the traveller's money, and of Jean l'Ecorcheur, who, sometimes, did not kill all travellers.

In endowing M. Bonaparte with twelve millions of francs, and four millions more for keeping up the châteaux, the Senate--endowed by M. Bonaparte with a million--felicitated M. Bonaparte upon "having saved society," much as a character in a comedy congratulates another on having "saved the money-box."

For myself, I am still seeking in the glorification of M. Bonaparte by his most ardent apologists, any praise that would not exactly befit Cartouche or Poulailler, after a good stroke of business; and I blush sometimes for the French language, and for the name of Napoleon, at the terms, really over-raw, and too thinly veiled, and too appropriate to the facts, in which the magistracy and clergy felicitate this man on having stolen the power of the State by burglarising the Constitution, and on having, by night, evaded his oath.

When all the burglaries and all the robberies which constitute the success of his policy had been accomplished, he resumed his true name; every one then saw that this man was a Monseigneur. It was M. Fortoul,[1]--to his honour be it said--who first made this discovery.

[1] The first report addressed to M. Bonaparte, and in which M. Bonaparte is called Monseigneur is signed FORTOUL.

When one measures the man and finds him so small, and then measures his success, and finds it so enormous, it is impossible that the mind should not experience some surprise. One asks oneself: "How did he do

it?" One dissects the adventure and the adventurer, and laying aside the advantage he derives from his name, and certain external facts, of which he made use in his escalade, one finds, as the basis of the man and his exploit, but two things,--cunning and cash.

As to cunning: we have already characterised this important quality of Louis Bonaparte; but it is desirable to dwell on the point.

On November 27, 1848, he said to his fellow-citizens in his manifesto: "I feel it incumbent on me to make known to you my sentiments and my principles. There must be no equivocation between you and me. I am not ambitious.... Brought up in free countries, in the school of misfortune, I shall ever remain faithful to the duties that shall be imposed on me by your suffrages, and the will of the Assembly. I shall make it a point of honour to leave, at the end of the four years, to my successor, power consolidated, liberty intact, and real progress accomplished."

On December 31, 1849, in his first message to the Assembly, he wrote: "It is my aspiration to be worthy of the confidence of the nation, by maintaining the Constitution which I have sworn to execute." On November 12, 1850, in his second annual message to the Assembly, he said: "If the Constitution contains defects and dangers, you are free to make them known to the country; I alone, bound by my oath, confine myself within the strict limits which that Constitution has traced." On September 4, in the same year, at Caen, he said: "When, in all

directions, prosperity seems reviving, he were, indeed, a guilty man who should seek to check its progress by changing that which now exists." Some time before, on July 25, 1849, at the inauguration of the St. Quentin railway, he went to Ham, smote his breast at the recollection of Boulogne, and uttered these solemn words:

"Now that, elected by universal France, I am become the legitimate head of this great nation, I cannot pride myself on a captivity which was occasioned by an attack upon a regular government.

"When one has observed the enormous evils which even the most righteous revolutions bring in their train, one can scarcely comprehend one's audacity in having chosen to take upon one's self the terrible responsibility of a change; I do not, therefore, complain of having expiated here, by an imprisonment of six years, my rash defiance of the laws of my country, and it is with joy that, in the very scene of my sufferings, I propose to you a toast in honour of those who, notwithstanding their convictions, are resolute to respect the institutions of their country."

All the while he was saying this, he retained in the depths of his heart, as he has since proved, after his fashion, that thought which he had written in that same prison of Ham: "Great enterprises seldom succeed at the first attempt."[2]

[2] Historical Fragments.

Towards the middle of November, 1851, Representative F----, a frequenter of the Élysée, was dining with M. Bonaparte.

"What do they say in Paris, and in the Assembly?" asked the President of the representative.

"Oh, prince!"

"Well?"

"They are still talking."

"About what?"

"About the coup d'état."

"And the Assembly believes in it?"

"A little, prince."

"And you?"

"I--oh, not at all."

Louis Bonaparte earnestly grasped M. F----'s hands, and said to him

with feeling:

"I thank you, M. F----, you, at least, do not think me a scoundrel."

This happened a fortnight before December 2. At that time, and indeed, at that very moment, according to the admission of Maupas the confederate, Mazas was being made ready.

Cash: that is M. Bonaparte's other source of strength.

Let us take the facts, judicially proved by the trials at Strasburg and Boulogne.

At Strasburg, on October 30, 1836, Colonel Vaudrey, an accomplice of M. Bonaparte, commissioned the quartermasters of the 4th Regiment of artillery, "to distribute among the cannoneers of each battery, two pieces of gold."

On the 5th of August, 1840, in the steamboat he had freighted, the Ville d'Edimbourg, while at sea, M. Bonaparte called about him the sixty poor devils, his domestics, whom he had deceived into accompanying him by telling them he was going to Hamburg on a pleasure excursion, harangued them from the roof of one of his carriages fastened on the deck, declared his project, tossed them their disguise as soldiers, gave each of them a hundred francs, and then set them drinking. A little drunkenness does not damage great enterprises. "I

saw," said the witness Hobbs, the under-steward, before the Court of Peers,[3] "I saw in the cabin a great quantity of money. The passengers appeared to me to be reading printed papers; they passed all the night drinking and eating. I did nothing else but uncork bottles, and serve food." Next came the captain. The magistrate asked Captain Crow: "Did you see the passengers drink?"--Crow: "To excess; I never saw anything like it."[4]

[3] Court of Peers, Depositions of witnesses, p. 94.

[4] Court of Peers, Depositions of witnesses, pp. 71, 81, 88, 94.

They landed, and were met by the custom-house officers of Vimereux. M. Louis Bonaparte began proceedings, by offering the lieutenant of the guard a pension of 1,200 francs. The magistrate: "Did you not offer the commandant of the station a sum of money if he would march with you?"--The Prince: "I caused it to be offered him, but he refused it."[5]

[5] Court of Peers, Cross examination of the accused, p. 13.

They arrived at Boulogne. His aides-de-camp--he had some already--wore, hanging from their necks, tin cases full of gold pieces. Others came next with bags of small coins in their hands.[6] Then they threw money to the fishermen and the peasants, inviting them to cry: "Long live the

Emperor!"--"Three hundred loud-mouthed knaves will do the thing," had written one of the conspirators.[7] Louis Bonaparte approached the 42nd, quartered at Boulogne.

[6] Court of Peers, Depositions of witnesses, pp. 103, 185, etc.

[7] The President: Prisoner Querelles, these children that cried out, are not they the three hundred loud-mouthed knaves that you asked for in your letter?--(Trial at Strasburg.)

He said to the voltigeur Georges Koehly: "I am Napoleon; you shall have promotion, decorations." He said to the voltigeur Antoine Gendre: "I am the son of Napoleon; we are going to the Hôtel du Nord to order a dinner for you and me." He said to the voltigeur Jean Meyer: "You shall be well paid." He said to the voltigeur Joseph Mény: "You must come to Paris; you shall be well paid."[8]

[8] Court of Peers, Depositions of witnesses, pp. 142, 143, 155, 156, 158.

An officer at his side held in his hand his hat full of five-franc pieces, which he distributed among the lookers-on, saying: "Shout, Long live the Emperor!"

The grenadier Geoffroy, in his evidence, characterises in these words

the attempt made on his mess by an officer and a sergeant who were in the plot: "The sergeant had a bottle in his hand, and the officer a sabre." In these few words is the whole 2nd of December.

Let us proceed:--

"Next day, June 17, the commandant, Mésonan, who I thought had gone, entered my room, announced by my aide-de-camp. I said to him, 'Commandant, I thought you were gone!'--'No, general, I am not gone. I have a letter to give you.'--'A letter? And from whom?'--'Read it, general.'

"I asked him to take a seat; I took the letter, but as I was opening it, I saw that the address was--à M. le Commandant Mésonan. I said to him: 'But, my dear Commandant, this is for you, not for me.'--'Read it, General!'--I opened the letter and read thus:--

> "'My dear Commandant, it is most essential that you should immediately see the general in question; you know he is a man of resolution, on whom one may rely. You know also that he is a man whom I have put down to be one day a marshal of France. You will offer him, from me, 100,000 francs; and you will ask him into what banker's or notary's hands I shall pay 300,000 francs for him, in the event of his losing his command.'

"I stopped here, overcome with indignation; I turned over the leaf, and

I saw that the letter was signed, 'LOUIS NAPOLEON.'

"I handed the letter back to the commandant, saying that it was a ridiculous and abortive affair."

Who speaks thus? General Magnan. Where? In the open Court of Peers. Before whom? Who is the man seated on the prisoners' bench, the man whom Magnan covers with "scorn," the man towards whom Magnan turns his "indignant" face? Louis Bonaparte.

Money, and with money gross debauchery: such were his means of action in his three enterprises at Strasburg, at Boulogne, at Paris. Two failures and a success. Magnan, who refused at Boulogne, sold himself at Paris. If Louis Bonaparte had been defeated on the 2nd of December, just as there were found on him, at Boulogne, the 500,000 francs he had brought from London, so there would have been found at the Élysée, the twenty-five millions taken from the Bank.

There has, then, been in France,--one must needs speak of these things coolly,--in France, that land of the sword, that land of cavaliers, the land of Hoche, of Drouot, and of Bayard--there has been a day, when a man, surrounded by five or six political sharpers, experts in ambuscades, and grooms of coups d'état, lolling in a gilded office, his feet on the fire-dogs, a cigar in his mouth, placed a price upon military honour, weighed it in the scales like a commodity, a thing buyable and sellable, put down the general at a million, the private at

a louis, and said of the conscience of the French army: "That is worth so much."

And this man is the nephew of the Emperor.

By the bye, this nephew is not proud: he accommodates himself, with great facility, to the necessities of his adventures; adapts himself readily and without reluctance, to every freak of destiny. Place him in London, and let it be his interest to please the English government, he would not hesitate, and with the very hand which now seeks to seize the sceptre of Charlemagne, he would grasp the truncheon of a policeman. If I were not Napoleon, I would be Vidocq.

And here thought pauses!

And such is the man by whom France is governed! governed, do I say? possessed rather in full sovereignty!

And every day, and every moment, by his decrees, by his messages, by his harangues, by all these unprecedented imbecilities which he parades in the Moniteur, this émigré, so ignorant of France, gives lessons to France! and this knave tells France that he has saved her! From whom? from herself. Before he came, Providence did nothing but absurdities; God waited for him to put everything in order; and at length he came. For the last thirty-six years poor France had been afflicted with all sorts of pernicious things: that "sonority," the

tribune; that hubbub, the press; that insolence, thought; that crying abuse, liberty: he came, and for the tribune, he substituted the Senate; for the press, the censorship; for thought, imbecility; for liberty, the sabre; and by the sabre, the censorship, imbecility, and the Senate, France is saved! Saved! bravo! and from whom, I ask again? from herself. For what was France before, if you please? a horde of pillagers, robbers, Jacquerie, assassins, demagogues! It was necessary to put fetters on this abominable villain, this France, and it was M. Bonaparte Louis who applied the fetters. Now France is in prison, on bread and water, punished, humiliated, throttled and well guarded; be tranquil, everybody; Sieur Bonaparte, gendarme at the Élysée, answers for her to Europe; this miserable France is in her strait waistcoat, and if she stirs!--

Ah! what spectacle is this? What dream is this? What nightmare is this? On the one hand, a nation, first among nations, and on the other, a man, last among men--and see what that man does to that nation! God save the mark! He tramples her under foot, he laughs at her to her face, he flouts her, he denies her, he insults her, he scoffs at her! How now! He says, there is none but I! What! in this land of France where no man's ears may be boxed with impunity, one may box the ears of the whole people! Oh! abominable shame! Each time that M. Bonaparte spits, every one must needs wipe his face! And this can last! And you tell me that it will last! No! No! No! By all the blood we have in our veins, no! this shall not last. Were it to last, it must be that there is no God in heaven, or no longer a France on earth!