

VICTOR HUGO

NAPOLEON

THE LITTLE

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Napoleon the Little

«Public Domain»

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Victor Hugo

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, Arnaud 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

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

"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

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

¹ "Hear! Hear!" —*Moniteur*.

² "Murmurs of assent." —*Moniteur*.

³ "Renewed murmurs of assent." —*Moniteur*.

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:

"Decreets —

"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 sequestered, 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, bayoneted, 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."⁴ 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."

On the 6th of August, 1840 he disembarked at Boulogne, parodying the disembarkation at Cannes, with the *petit chapeau* on his head,⁵ 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,⁶ 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;⁷ the procureur-general, Franck-Carré, 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.

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

⁴ 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."

⁵ Court of Peers. Attempt of the 6th August, 1840, page 140, evidence of Geoffroy, grenadier.

⁶ Captain Col. Puygellier, who had said to him: "You are a conspirator and a traitor."

⁷ Court of Peers. Evidence of the witness Adam, Mayor of Boulogne.

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,⁸ 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!

⁸ 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 Poulailleur, 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,⁹ – to his honour be it said – who first made this discovery.

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*

⁹ The first report addressed to M. Bonaparte, and in which M. Bonaparte is called *Monseigneur* is signed Fortoul.

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."¹⁰

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,¹¹ "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."¹²

¹⁰ *Historical Fragments.*

¹¹ Court of Peers, *Depositions of witnesses*, p. 94.

¹² 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."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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ Louis Bonaparte approached the 42nd, quartered at Boulogne.

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*."¹⁶

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.

¹³ Court of Peers, *Cross examination of the accused*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Court of Peers, *Depositions of witnesses*, pp. 103, 185, etc.

¹⁵ 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.)

¹⁶ Court of Peers, *Depositions of witnesses*, pp. 142, 143, 155, 156, 158.

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 ambushes, 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!

BOOK II

I

THE CONSTITUTION

A roll of the drums; clowns, attention!

The President of the Republic,

"Considering that – all the restrictive laws on the liberty of the press having been repealed, all the laws against hand-bills and posting-bills having been abolished, the right of public assemblage having been fully re-established, all the unconstitutional laws, including martial law, having been suppressed, every citizen being empowered to say what he likes through every medium of publicity, whether newspaper, placard, or electoral meeting, all solemn engagements, especially the oath of the 20th of December, 1848, having been scrupulously kept, all facts having been investigated, all questions propounded and discussed, all candidacies publicly defeated, without the possibility of alleging that the slightest violence had been exercised against the meanest citizen, – in one word, in the fullest enjoyment of liberty. "The sovereign people being interrogated on this question: —

"Do the French people mean to place themselves, tied neck and heels, at the discretion of M. Louis Bonaparte?"

"Have replied YES by 7,500,000 votes. (*Interruption by the author: – We shall have more to say of these 7,500,000 votes.*)

"PROMULGATES

"THE CONSTITUTION IN MANNER FOLLOWING, THAT IS TO SAY:

"Article 1. The Constitution recognises, confirms, and guarantees the great principles proclaimed in 1789, which are the foundation of the public law of the French people.

"Article 2 and following. The platform and the press, which impeded the march of progress, are superseded by the police and the censorship, and by the secret deliberations of the Senate, the Corps Législatif and the Council of State.

"Article last. The thing commonly called human intelligence is suppressed.

"Done at the Palace of the Tuileries January 14, 1852.

"Louis Napoleon.

"Witnessed and sealed with the great seal.

"E. Rouher.

"Keeper of the Seals and Minister of Justice."

This Constitution, which loudly proclaims and confirms the Revolution of 1789 in its principles and its consequences, and which merely abolishes liberty, was evidently and happily inspired in M. Bonaparte, by an old provincial play-bill which it is well to recall at this time:

This Day,

The Grand Representation

of

LA DAME BLANCHE,

an opera in three acts

Note. The *music*, which would embarrass the progress of the plot, will be replaced by lively and piquant *dialogue*.

II THE SENATE

This lively and piquant dialogue is carried on by the Council of State, the Corps Législatif and the Senate.

Is there a Senate then? Certainly. This "great body," this "balancing power," this "supreme moderator," is in truth the principal glory of the Constitution. Let us consider it for a moment.

The Senate! It is a senate. But of what Senate are you speaking? Is it the Senate whose duty it was to deliberate on the description of sauce with which the Emperor should eat his turbot? Is it the Senate of which Napoleon thus spoke on April 5, 1814: "A sign was an order for the Senate, and it always did more than was required of it?" Is it the Senate of which Napoleon said in 1805: "The poltroons were afraid of displeasing me?"¹⁷ Is it the Senate which drew from Tiberius almost the same exclamation: "The base wretches! greater slaves than we require them to be!" Is it the Senate which caused Charles XII to say: "Send my boot to Stockholm." – "For what purpose, Sire?" demanded his minister. – "To preside over the Senate," was the reply.

But let us not trifle. This year they are eighty; they will be one hundred and fifty next year. They monopolise to themselves, in full plenitude, fourteen articles of the Constitution, from Article 19 to Article 33. They are "guardians of the public liberties;" their functions are gratuitous by Article 22; consequently, they have from fifteen to thirty thousand francs per annum. They have the peculiar privilege of receiving their salary, and the prerogative of "not opposing" the promulgation of the laws. They are all illustrious personages."¹⁸ This is not an "abortive Senate,"¹⁹ like that of Napoleon the uncle; this is a genuine Senate; the marshals are members, and the cardinals and M. Leboeuf.

"What is your position in the country?" some one asks the Senate. "We are charged with the preservation of public liberty." – "What is your business in this city?" Pierrot demands of Harlequin. – "My business," replies Harlequin, "is to curry-comb the bronze horse."

"We know what is meant by *esprit-de-corps*: this spirit will urge the Senate by every possible means to augment its power. It will destroy the Corps Législatif, if it can; and if occasion offers it will compound with the Bourbons."

Who said this? The First Consul. Where? At the Tuileries, in April, 1804.

"Without title or authority, and in violation of every principle, it has surrendered the country and consummated its ruin. It has been the plaything of eminent intriguers; I know of no body which ought to appear in history with greater ignominy than the Senate."

Who said this? The Emperor. Where? At St. Helena.

There is actually then a senate in the "Constitution of January 14." But, candidly speaking, this is a mistake; for now that public hygiene has made some progress, we are accustomed to see the public highway better kept. After the Senate of the Empire, we thought that no more senates would be mixed up with Constitutions.

¹⁷ Thibaudeau. *History of the Consulate and the Empire*.

¹⁸ "All the illustrious persons of the country." Louis Bonaparte's *Appeal to the people*. December 2, 1851.

¹⁹ "The Senate was an abortion; and in France no one likes to see people well paid merely for making some bad selections." Words of Napoleon, *Memorial from St. Helena*.

III

THE COUNCIL OF STATE AND THE CORPS LÉGISLATIF

There is also a Council of State and a Corps Législatif: the former joyous, well paid, plump, rosy, fat, and fresh, with a sharp eye, a red ear, a voluble tongue, a sword by its side, a belly, and embroidered in gold; the Corps Législatif, pale, meagre, sad, and embroidered in silver. The Council of State comes and goes, enters and exits, returns, rules, disposes, decides, settles, and decrees, and sees Louis Napoleon face to face. The Corps Législatif, on the contrary, walks on tiptoe, fumbles with its hat, puts its finger to its lips, smiles humbly, sits on the corner of its chair, and speaks only when questioned. Its words being naturally obscene, the public journals are forbidden to make the slightest allusion to them. The Corps Législatif passes laws and votes taxes by Article 39; and when, fancying it has occasion for some instruction, some detail, some figures, or some explanation, it presents itself, hat in hand, at the door of the departments to consult the ministers, the usher receives it in the antechamber, and with a roar of laughter, gives it a fillip on the nose. Such are the duties of the Corps Législatif.

Let us state, however, that this melancholy position began, in June, 1852, to extort some sighs from the sorrowful personages who form a portion of the concern. The report of the commission on the budget will remain in the memory of men, as one of the most heart-rending masterpieces of the plaintive style. Let us repeat those gentle accents: —

"Formerly, as you know, the necessary communications in such cases were carried on directly between the commissioners and the ministers. It was to the latter that they addressed themselves to obtain the documents indispensable to the discussion of affairs; and the ministers even came personally, with the heads of their several departments, to give verbal explanations, frequently sufficient to preclude the necessity of further discussion; and the resolutions formed by the commission on the budget after they had heard them, were submitted direct to the Chamber.

"But now we can have no communication with the government except through the medium of the Council of State, which, being the confidant and the organ of its own ideas, has alone the right of transmitting to the Corps Législatif the documents which, in its turn, it receives from the ministers.

"In a word, for written reports, as well as for verbal communications, the government commissioners have superseded the ministers, with whom, however, they must have a preliminary understanding.

"With respect to the modifications which the commission might wish to propose, whether by the adoption of amendments presented by the deputies, or from its own examination of the budget, they must, before you are called upon to consider them, be sent to the Council of State, there to undergo discussion.

"There (it is impossible not to notice it) those modifications have no interpreters, no official defenders.

"This mode of procedure appears to be derived from the Constitution itself; and *if we speak of the matter now*, it is *solely* to prove to you that it must occasion *delays* in accomplishing the task imposed upon the commission on the budget."²⁰

Reproach was never so mildly uttered; it is impossible to receive more chastely and more gracefully, what M. Bonaparte, in his autocratic style, calls "guarantees of calmness,"²¹ but what Molière, with the license of a great writer, denominates "kicks."²²

²⁰ Report of the commission on the budget of the Corps Législatif, June, 1852.

²¹ Preamble of the Constitution.

²² See *Les Fourberies de Scapin*.

Thus, in the shop where laws and budgets are manufactured, there is a master of the house, the Council of State, and a servant, the Corps Législatif. According to the terms of the "Constitution," who is it that appoints the master of the house? M. Bonaparte. Who appoints the servant? The nation. That is as it should be.

IV THE FINANCES

Let it be observed that, under the shadow of these "wise institutions," and thanks to the *coup d'état*, which, as is well known, has re-established order, the finances, the public safety, and public prosperity, the budget, by the admission of M. Gouin, shows a deficit of 123,000,000 francs.

As for commercial activity since the *coup d'état*, as for the prosperity of trade, as for the revival of business, in order to appreciate them it is enough to reject words and have recourse to figures. On this point, the following statement is official and decisive: the discounts of the Bank of France produced during the first half of 1852, only 589,502fr. 62c. at the central bank; while the profits of the branch establishments have risen only to 651,108fr. 7c. This appears from the half-yearly report of the Bank itself.

M. Bonaparte, however, does not trouble himself with taxation. Some fine morning he wakes and yawns, rubs his eyes, takes his pen and decrees – what? The budget. Achmet III. was once desirous of levying taxes according to his own fancy. – "Invincible lord," said his Vizier to him, "your subjects cannot be taxed beyond what is prescribed by the law and the prophet."

This identical M. Bonaparte, when at Ham, wrote as follows: —

"If the sums levied each year on the inhabitants generally are employed for unproductive purposes, such as creating *useless places, raising sterile monuments, and maintaining in the midst of profound peace a more expensive army than that which conquered at Austerlitz*, taxation becomes in such case an overwhelming burden; it exhausts the country, it takes without any return."²³

With reference to this word budget an observation occurs to us. In this present year 1852, the bishops and the judges of the *Cour de Cassation*,²⁴ have 50 francs per diem; the archbishops, the councillors of state, the first presidents, and the procureurs-general, have each 69 francs per diem; the senators, the prefects, and the generals of division receive 83 francs each per diem; the presidents of sections of the Council of State 222 francs per diem; the ministers 252 francs per diem; Monseigneur the Prince-President, comprising of course, in his salary, the sum for maintenance of the royal residences, receives per diem 44,444 francs, 44 centimes. The revolution of the 2nd of December was made against the Twenty-five Francs!

²³ *Extinction of Pauperism*, page 10.

²⁴ Court of Appeal.

V THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS

We have now seen what the legislature is, what the administration, and what the budget.

And the courts! What was formerly called the *Cour de Cassation* is no longer anything more than a record office of councils of war. A soldier steps out of the guard-house and writes in the margin of the book of the law, *I will*, or *I will not*. In all directions the corporal gives the order, and the magistrate countersigns it. Come! tuck up your gowns and begone, or else – Hence these abominable trials, sentences, and condemnations. What a sorry spectacle is that troop of judges, with hanging heads and bent backs, driven with the butt end of the musket into baseness and iniquity!

And the liberty of the press! What shall we say of it? Is it not a mockery merely to pronounce the words? That free press, the honour of French intellect, a light thrown from all points at once upon all questions, the perpetual sentinel of the nation – where is it? What has M. Bonaparte done with it? It is where the public platform is. Twenty newspapers extinguished in Paris, eighty in the departments, – one hundred newspapers suppressed: that is to say, looking only to the material side of the question, innumerable families deprived of bread; that is to say, understand it, citizens, one hundred houses confiscated, one hundred farms taken from their proprietors, one hundred interest coupons stolen from the public funds. Marvellous identity of principles: freedom suppressed is property destroyed. Let the selfish idiots who applaud the *coup d'état* reflect upon this.

Instead of a law concerning the press a decree has been laid upon it; a *fetfa*, a *firman*, dated from the imperial stirrup: the régime of admonition. This régime is well known. Its working is witnessed daily. Such men were requisite to invent such a thing. Despotism has never shown itself more grossly insolent and stupid than in this species of censorship of the morrow, which precedes and announces the suppression, and which administers the bastinado to a paper before killing it entirely. The folly of such a government corrects and tempers its atrocity. The whole of the decree concerning the press may be summed up in one line: "I permit you to speak, but I require you to be silent." Who reigns, in God's name? Is it Tiberius? Is it Schahabaham? Three-fourths of the republican journalists transported or proscribed, the remainder hunted down by mixed commissions, dispersed, wandering, in hiding. Here and there, in four or five of the surviving journals, in four or five which are independent but closely watched, over whose heads is suspended the club of Maupas,²⁵ some fifteen or twenty writers, courageous, serious, pure, honest, and noble-hearted, who write, as it were, with a chain round their necks, and a ball on their feet; talent between two sentinels, independence gagged, honesty under surveillance, and Veuillot exclaiming: "I am free!"

²⁵ The Prefect of Police.

VI

NOVELTIES IN RESPECT TO WHAT IS LAWFUL

The press enjoys the privilege of being censored, of being admonished, of being suspended, of being suppressed; it has even the privilege of being tried. Tried! By whom? By the courts. What courts? The police courts. And what about that excellent trial by jury? Progress: it is outstripped. The jury is far behind us, and we return to the government judges. "Repression is more rapid and more efficacious," as Maître Rouher says. And then 'tis so much better. Call the causes: correctional police, sixth chamber; first cause, one Roumage, swindler; second cause, one Lamennais, writer. This has a good effect, and accustoms the citizens to talk without distinction of writers and swindlers. That, certainly, is an advantage; but in a practical point of view, with reference to "repression," is the government quite sure of what it has done on that head? Is it quite sure that the sixth chamber will answer better than the excellent assize court of Paris, for instance, which had for president such abject creatures as Partarrieu-Lafosse, and for advocates at its bar, such base wretches as Suin, and such dull orators as Mongis? Can it reasonably expect that the police judges will be still more base and more contemptible than they? Will those judges, salaried as they are, work better than that jury-squad, who had the department prosecutor for corporal, and who pronounced their judgments and gesticulated their verdicts with the precision of a charge in double quick time, so that the prefect of police, Carlier, good-humouredly observed to a celebrated advocate, M. Desm – : "*The jury! what a stupid institution! When not forced to it they never condemn, but when forced they never acquit.*" Let us weep for that worthy jury which was made by Carlier and unmade by Rouher.

This government feels that it is hideous. It wants no portrait; above all it wants no mirror. Like the osprey it takes refuge in darkness, and it would die if once seen. Now it wishes to endure. It does not propose to be talked about; it does not propose to be described. It has imposed silence on the press of France; we have seen in what manner. But to silence the press in France was only half-success. It must also be silenced in foreign countries. Two prosecutions were attempted in Belgium, against the *Bulletin Français* and against *La Nation*. They were acquitted by an honest Belgian jury. This was annoying. What was to be done? The Belgian journals were attacked through their pockets. "You have subscribers in France," they were told; "but if you 'discuss' us, you shall be kept out. If you wish to come in, make yourselves agreeable." An attempt was made to frighten the English journals. "If you 'discuss' us" – decidedly they do not wish to be *discussed* – "we shall drive your correspondents out of France." The English press roared with laughter. But this is not all. There are French writers outside of France: they are proscribed, that is to say they are free. Suppose those fellows should speak? Suppose those demagogues should write? They are very capable of doing both; and we must prevent them. But how are we to do it? To gag people at a distance is not so easy a matter: M. Bonaparte's arm is not long enough for that. Let us try, however; we will prosecute them in the countries where they have taken refuge. Very good: the juries of free countries will understand that these exiles represent justice, and that the Bonapartist government personifies iniquity. These juries will follow the example of the Belgian jury and acquit. The friendly governments will then be solicited to expel these refugees, to banish these exiles. Very good: the exiles will go elsewhere; they will always find some corner of the earth open to them where they can speak. How then are they to be got at? Rouher and Baroche clubbed their wits together, and between them they hit upon this expedient: to patch up a law dealing with crimes committed by Frenchmen in foreign countries, and to slip into it "crimes of the press." The Council of State sanctioned this, and the Corps Législatif did not oppose it, and it is now the law of the land. If we speak outside of France, we shall be condemned for the offence in France; imprisonment (in future, if caught), fines and confiscations. Again, very good. The book I am now writing will, therefore, be tried in France, and its author duly convicted; this I expect, and I confine myself to apprising all those quidams calling themselves magistrates, who,

in black and red gown, shall concoct the thing that, sentence to any fine whatever being well and duly pronounced against me, nothing will equal my disdain for the judgment, but my contempt for the judges. This is my defence.

VII THE ADHERENTS

Who are they that flock round the establishment? As we have said, the gorge rises at thought of them.

Ah! these rulers of the day, – we who are now proscribed remember them when they were representatives of the people, only twelve months ago, running hither and thither in the lobbies of the Assembly, their heads high, and with a show of independence, and the air and manner of men who belonged to themselves. What magnificence! and how proud they were! How they placed their hands on their hearts while they shouted "Vive la République!" And if some "Terrorist," some "Montagnard," or some "red republican," happened to allude from the tribune to the planned *coup d'état* and the projected Empire, how they vociferated at him: "You are a calumniator!" How they shrugged their shoulders at the word "Senate!" – "The Empire to-day" cried one, "would be blood and slime; you slander us, we shall never be implicated in such a matter." Another affirmed that he consented to be one of the President's ministers solely to devote himself to the defence of the Constitution and the laws; a third glorified the tribune as the palladium of the country; a fourth recalled the oath of Louis Bonaparte, exclaiming: "Do you doubt that he is an honest man?" These last – there were two of them – went the length of voting for and signing his deposition, on the 2nd of December, at the mayoralty of the Tenth Arrondissement; another sent a note on the 4th of December to the writer of these lines, to "felicitate him on having dictated the proclamation of the Left, by which Louis Bonaparte was outlawed." And now, behold them, Senators, Councillors of State, ministers, belaced, betagged, bedizened with gold! Base wretches! Before you embroider your sleeves, wash your hands!

M. Q. – B. paid a visit to M. O. – B. and said to him: "Can you conceive the assurance of this Bonaparte? he has had the presumption to offer me the place of Master of Requests!" – "You refused it?" – "Certainly." – The next day, being offered the place of Councillor of State, salary twenty-five thousand francs, our indignant Master of Requests becomes a grateful Councillor of State. M. Q. – B. accepts.

One class of men rallied en masse: the fools! They comprise the sound part of the Corps Législatif. It was to them that the head of the State addressed this little flattery: – "The first test of the Constitution, entirely of French origin, must have convinced you that we possess the qualities of a strong and a free government. We are in earnest, discussion is free, and the vote of taxation decisive. France possesses a government animated by faith and by love of the right, which is based upon the people, the source of all power; upon the army, the source of all strength; and upon religion, the source of all justice. Accept the assurance of my regard." These worthy dupes, we know them also; we have seen a goodly number of them on the benches of the majority in the Legislative Assembly. Their chiefs, skilful manipulators, had succeeded in terrifying them, – a certain method of leading them wherever they thought proper. These chiefs, unable any longer to employ usefully those old bugbears, the terms "Jacobin" and "sans-culotte," decidedly too hackneyed, had furbished up the word "demagogue." These ringleaders, trained to all sorts of schemes and manœuvres, exploited successfully the word "Mountain," and agitated to good purpose that startling and glorious souvenir. With these few letters of the alphabet formed into syllables and suitably accented, – Demagogues, Montagnards, Partitioners, Communists, Red Republicans, – they made wildfires dance before the eyes of the simple. They had found the method of perverting the brains of their colleagues, who were so ingenuous as to swallow them whole, so to speak, with a sort of dictionary, wherein every expression made use of by the democratic writers and orators was readily translated. For *humanity* read *ferocity*; for *universal good* read *subversion*; for *Republic* read *Terrorism*; for *Socialism* read *Pillage*; for *Fraternity*, read *Massacre*; for *the Gospel*, read *Death to the Rich*. So that, when an orator

of the Left exclaimed, for instance: "*We rush for the suppression of war, and the abolition of the death penalty,*" a crowd of poor souls on the Right distinctly understood: "*We wish to put everything to fire and sword;*" and in a fury shook their fists at the orator. After such speeches, in which there had been a question only of liberty, of universal peace, of prosperity arising from labour, of concord, and of progress, the representatives of that category which we have designated at the head of this paragraph, were seen to rise, pale as death; they were not sure that they were not already guillotined, and went to look for their hats to see whether they still had heads.

These poor frightened creatures did not haggle over their adhesion to the 2nd of December. The expression, "Louis Napoleon has saved society," was invented especially for them.

And those eternal prefects, those eternal mayors, those eternal magistrates, those eternal sheriffs, those eternal complimenterers of the rising sun, or of the lighted lamp, who, on the day after success, flock to the conqueror, to the triumpher, to the master, to his Majesty Napoleon the Great, to his Majesty Louis XVIII, to his Majesty Alexander I, to his Majesty Charles X, to his Majesty Louis Philippe, to Citizen Lamartine, to Citizen Cavaignac, to Monseigneur the Prince-President, kneeling, smiling, expansive, bearing upon salvers the keys of their towns, and on their faces the keys of their consciences!

But imbeciles ('tis an old story) have always made a part of all institutions, and are almost an institution of themselves; and as for the prefects and magistrates, as for these adorers of every new régime, insolent with, fortune and rapidity, they abound at all times. Let us do justice to the régime of December; it can boast not only of such partisans as these, but it has creatures and adherents peculiar to itself; it has produced an altogether new race of notabilities.

Nations are never conscious of all the riches they possess in the matter of knaves. Overturnings and subversions of this description are necessary to bring them to light. Then the nations wonder at what issues from the dust. It is splendid to contemplate. One whose shoes and clothes and reputation were of a sort to attract all the dogs of Europe in full cry, comes forth an ambassador. Another, who had a glimpse of *Bicêtre* and *La Roquette*,²⁶ awakes a general, and Grand Eagle of the Legion of Honour. Every adventurer assumes an official costume, furnishes himself with a good pillow stuffed with bank-notes, takes a sheet of white paper, and writes thereon: "End of my adventures." – "You know So-and-So?" – "Yes, is he at the galleys?" – "No, he's a minister."

²⁶ State prisons in Paris and Languedoc.

VIII MENS AGITAT MOLEM

In the centre is the man – the man we have described; the man of Punic faith, the fatal man, attacking the civilisation to arrive at power; seeking, elsewhere than amongst the true people, one knows not what ferocious popularity; cultivating the still uncivilized qualities of the peasant and the soldier, endeavouring to succeed by appealing to gross selfishness, to brutal passions, to newly awakened desires, to excited appetites; something like a Prince Marat, with nearly the same object, which in Marat was grand, and in Louis Bonaparte is little; the man who kills, who transports, who banishes, who expels, who proscribes, who despoils; this man with harassed gesture and glassy eye, who walks with distracted air amid the horrible things he does, like a sort of sinister somnambulist.

It has been said of Louis Bonaparte, whether with friendly intent or otherwise, – for these strange beings have strange flatterers, – "He is a dictator, he is a despot, nothing more." – He is that in our opinion, and he is also something else.

The dictator was a magistrate. Livy²⁷ and Cicero²⁸ call him *praetor maximus*; Seneca²⁹ calls him *magister populi*; what he decreed was looked upon as a fiat from above. Livy³⁰ says: *pro numine observatum*. In those times of incomplete civilisation, the rigidity of the ancient laws not having foreseen all cases, his function was to provide for the safety of the people; he was the product of this text: *salus populi suprema lex esto*. He caused to be carried before him the twenty-four axes, the emblems of his power of life and death. He was outside the law, and above the law, but he could not touch the law. The dictatorship was a veil, behind which the law remained intact. The law was before the dictator and after him; and it resumed its power over him on the cessation of his office. He was appointed for a very short period – six months only: *semestris dictatura*, says Livy.³¹ But as if this enormous power, even when freely conferred by the people, ultimately weighed heavily upon him, like remorse, the dictator generally resigned before the end of his term. Cincinnatus gave it up at the end of eight days. The dictator was forbidden to dispose of the public funds without the authority of the Senate, or to go out of Italy. He could not even ride on horseback without the permission of the people. He might be a plebeian; Marcius Rutilus, and Publius Philo were dictators. That magistracy was created for very different objects: to organize fêtes for saints' days; to drive a sacred nail into the wall of the Temple of Jupiter; on one occasion to appoint the Senate. Republican Rome had eighty-eight dictators. This intermittent institution continued for one hundred and fifty-three years, from the year of Rome 552, to the year 711. It began with Servilius Geminus, and reached Cæsar, passing over Sylla. It expired with Cæsar. The dictatorship was fitted to be repudiated by Cincinnatus, and to be espoused by Cæsar. Cæsar was five times dictator in the course of five years, from 706 to 711. This was a dangerous magistracy, and it ended by devouring liberty.

Is M. Bonaparte a dictator? We see no impropriety in answering yes. *Praetor maximus*, – general-in-chief? the colours salute him. *Magister populi*, – the master of the people? ask the cannons levelled on the public squares. *Pro numine observatum*, – regarded as God? ask M. Troplong. He has appointed the Senate, he has instituted holidays, he has provided for the "safety of society," he has driven a sacred nail into the wall of the Pantheon, and he has hung upon this nail his *coup d'état*. The only discrepancy is, that he makes and unmakes the law according to his own fancy, he rides horseback without permission, and as to the six months, he takes a little more time. Cæsar took five

²⁷ Lib. vii., cap. 31.

²⁸ De Republica. Lib. i, cap. 40.

²⁹ Ep. 108.

³⁰ Lib. iii., cap. 5.

³¹ Lib. vi., cap. 1.

years, he takes double; that is but fair. Julius Cæsar five, M. Louis Bonaparte ten – the proportion is well observed.

From the dictator, let us pass to the despot. This is the other qualification almost accepted by M. Bonaparte. Let us speak for a while the language of the Lower Empire. It befits the subject.

The *Despotes* came after the *Basileus*. Among other attributes, he was general of the infantry and of the cavalry — *magister utriusque exercitus*. It was the Emperor Alexis, surnamed the Angel, who created the dignity of *despotes*. This officer was below the Emperor, and above the Sebastocrator, or Augustus, and above the Cæsar.

It will be seen that this is somewhat the case with us. M. Bonaparte is *despotes*, if we admit, which is not difficult, that Magnan is Cæsar, and that Maupais is Augustus.

Despot and dictator, that is admitted. But all this great *éclat*, all this triumphant power, does not prevent little incidents from happening in Paris, like the following, which honest *badauds*, witnesses of the fact, will tell you, musingly. Two men were walking in the street, talking of their business or their private affairs. One of them, referring to some knave or other, of whom he thought he had reason to complain, exclaimed: "He is a wretch, a swindler, a rascal!" A police agent who heard these last words, cried out: "Monsieur, you are speaking of the President; I arrest you."

And now, will M. Bonaparte be Emperor, or will he not?

A pretty question! He is master, – he is Cadi, Mufti, Bey, Dey, Sultan, Grand Khan, Grand Lama, Great Mogul, Great Dragon, Cousin to the Sun, Commander of the Faithful, Shah, Czar, Sofi, and Caliph. Paris is no longer Paris, but Bagdad; with a Giaffar who is called Persigny, and a Scheherazade who is in danger of having her head chopped off every morning, and who is called *Le Constitutionnel*. M. Bonaparte may do whatever he likes with property, families, and persons. If French citizens wish to fathom the depth of the "government" into which they have fallen, they have only to ask themselves a few questions. Let us see: magistrate, he tears off your gown, and sends you to prison. What of it? Let us see: Senate, Council of State, Corps Législatif, he seizes a shovel, and flings you all in a heap in a corner. What of it? Landed proprietor, he confiscates your country house and your town house, with courtyards, stables, gardens, and appurtenances. What of it? Father, he takes your daughter; brother, he takes your sister; citizen, he takes your wife, by right of might. What of it? Wayfarer, your looks displease him, and he blows your brains out with a pistol, and goes home. What of it?

All these things being done, what would be the result? Nothing. "Monseigneur the Prince-President took his customary drive yesterday in the Champs Élysées, in a calèche à la *Daumont*, drawn by four horses, accompanied by a single aide-de-camp." This is what the newspapers will say.

He has effaced from the walls Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity; and he is right. Frenchmen, alas! you are no longer either free, – the strait-waistcoat is upon you; or equal, – the soldier is everything; or brothers, – for civil war is brewing under this melancholy peace of a state of siege.

Emperor? Why not? He has a Maury who is called Sibour; he has a Fontanes, or, if you prefer it, a *Faciantasin*, who is called Fortoul; he has a Laplace who answers to the name of Leverrier, although he did not produce the "*Mécanique Céleste*." He will easily find Esménards and Luce de Lancivals. His Pius VII is at Rome, in the cassock of Pius IX. His green uniform has been seen at Strasburg; his eagle has been seen at Boulogne; his grey riding-coat, did he not wear it at Ham? Cassock or riding-coat, 'tis all one. Madame de Staël comes out, of his house. She wrote "Lelia." He smiles on her pending the day when he will exile her. Do you insist on an archduchess? wait awhile and he will get one. *Tu, felix Austria, nube*. His Murat is called Saint-Arnaud; his Talleyrand is called Morny; his Duc d'Enghien is called Law.

What does he lack then? Nothing; a mere trifle; merely Austerlitz and Marengo.

Make the best of it; he is Emperor *in petto*; one of these mornings he will be so in the sun; nothing more is wanting than a trivial formality, the mere consecration and crowning of his false oath at Notre-Dame. After that we shall have fine doings. Expect an imperial spectacle. Expect

caprices, surprises, stupefying, bewildering things, the most unexpected combinations of words, the most fearless cacophony? Expect Prince Troplong, Duc Maupas, Duc Mimerel, Marquis Leboeuf, Baron Baroche. Form in line, courtiers; hats off, senators; the stable-door opens, monseigneur the horse is consul. Gild the oats of his highness Incitatus.

Everything will be swallowed; the public hiatus will be prodigious. All the enormities will pass away. The old fly-catchers will disappear and make room for the swallowers of whales.

To our minds the Empire exists from this moment, and without waiting for the interlude of the senatus consultum and the comedy of the plebiscite, we despatch this bulletin to Europe: —

"The treason of the 2nd of December is delivered of the Empire.

"The mother and child are indisposed."

IX OMNIPOTENCE

Let us forget this man's origin and his 2nd of December, and look to his political capacity. Shall we judge him by the eight months he has reigned? On the one hand look at his power, and on the other at his acts. What can he do? Everything. What has he done? Nothing. With his unlimited power a man of genius, in eight months, would have changed the whole face of France, of Europe, perhaps. He would not, certainly, have effaced the crime of his starting-point, but he might have covered it. By dint of material improvements he might have succeeded, perhaps, in masking from the nation his moral abasement. Indeed, we must admit that for a dictator of genius the thing was not difficult. A certain number of social problems, elaborated during these last few years by several powerful minds, seemed to be ripe, and might receive immediate, practical solution, to the great profit and satisfaction of the nation. Of this, Louis Bonaparte does not appear to have had any idea. He has not approached, he has not had a glimpse of one of them. He has not even found at the Élysée any old remains of the socialist meditations of Ham. He has added several new crimes to his first one, and in this he has been logical. With the exception of these crimes he has produced nothing. Absolute power, no initiative! He has taken France and does not know what to do with it. In truth, we are tempted to pity this eunuch struggling with omnipotence.

It is true, however, that this dictator keeps in motion; let us do him this justice; he does not remain quiet for an instant; he sees with affright the gloom and solitude around him; people sing who are afraid in the dark, but he keeps moving. He makes a fuss, he goes at everything, he runs after projects; being unable to create, he decrees; he endeavours to mask his nullity; he is perpetual motion; but, alas! the wheel turns in empty space. Conversion of *rentes*? Of what profit has it been to this day? Saving of eighteen millions! Very good: the annuitants lose them, but the President and the Senate, with their two endowments, pocket them; the benefit to France is zero. Credit Foncier? no capital forthcoming. Railways? they are decreed, and then laid aside. It is the same with all these things as with the working-men's cities. Louis Bonaparte subscribes, but does not pay. As for the budget, the budget controlled by the blind men in the Council of State, and voted by the dumb men in the Corps Législatif, there is an abyss beneath it. There was no possible or efficacious budget but a great reduction in the army: two hundred thousand soldiers left at home, two hundred millions saved. Just try to touch the army! the soldier, who would regain his freedom, would applaud, but what would the officer say? And in reality, it is not the soldier but the officer who is caressed. Then Paris and Lyons must be guarded, and all the other cities; and afterwards, when we are Emperor, a little European war must be got up. Behold the gulf!

If from financial questions we pass to political institutions, oh! there the neo-Bonapartists flourish abundantly, there are the creations! Good heavens, what creations! A Constitution in the style of Ravrio, – we have been examining it, – ornamented with palm-leaves and swans' necks, borne to the Élysée with old easy-chairs in the carriages of the *garde-meuble*; the Conservative Senate restitched and regilded, the Council of State of 1806 refurbished and new-bordered with fresh lace; the old Corps Législatif patched up, with new nails and fresh paint, minus Lainé and plus Morny! In lieu of liberty of the press, the bureau of public spirit; in place of individual liberty, the ministry of police. All these "institutions," which we have passed in review, are nothing more than the old salon furniture of the Empire. Beat it, dust it, sweep away the cobwebs, splash it over with stains of French blood, and you have the establishment of 1852. This bric-à-brac governs France. These are the creations!

Where is common sense? where is reason? where is truth? Not a sound side of contemporary intelligence that has not received a shock, not a just conquest of the age that has not been thrown down and broken. All sorts of extravagance become possible. All that we have seen since the 2nd of December is a gallop, through all that is absurd, of a commonplace man broken loose.

These individuals, the malefactor and his accomplices, are in possession of immense, incomparable, absolute, unlimited power, sufficient, we repeat, to change the whole face of Europe. They make use of it only for amusement. To enjoy and to enrich themselves, such is their "socialism." They have stopped the budget on the public highway; the coffers are open; they fill their money-bags: they have money, – do you want some, here you are! All the salaries are doubled or trebled; we have given the figures above. Three ministers, Turgot (for there is a Turgot in this affair), Persigny and Maupas, have a million each of secret funds; the Senate a million, the Council of State half a million, the officers of the 2nd of December have a Napoleon-month, that is to say, millions; the soldiers of the 2nd of December have medals, that is to say, millions; M. Murat wants millions and will have them; a minister gets married, – quick, half a million; M. Bonaparte, *quia nominor Poleo*, has twelve millions, plus four millions, – sixteen millions. Millions, millions! This regime is called Million. M. Bonaparte has three hundred horses for private use, the fruit and vegetables of the national domains, and parks and gardens formerly royal; he is stuffed to repletion; he said the other day: "all my carriages," as Charles V said: "all my Spains," and as Peter the Great said: "all my Russias." The marriage of Gamache is celebrated at the Élysée; the spits are turning day and night before the fireworks; according to the bulletins published on the subject, the bulletins of the new Empire, they consume there six hundred and fifty pounds of meat every day; the Élysée will soon have one hundred and forty-nine kitchens, like the Castle of Schönbrunn; they drink, they eat, they laugh, they feast; banquet at all the ministers', banquet at the École Militaire, banquet at the Hotel de Ville, banquet at the Tuileries, a monster fête on the 10th of May, a still more monster fête on the 15th of August; they swim in all sorts of abundance and intoxication. And the man of the people, the poor day-labourer who is out of work, the pauper in rags, with bare feet, to whom summer brings no bread, and winter no wood, whose old mother lies in agony upon a rotten mattress, whose daughter walks the streets for a livelihood, whose little children are shivering with hunger, fever and cold, in the hovels of Faubourg Saint-Marceau, in the cock-lofts of Rouen, and in the cellars of Lille, does any one think of him? What is to become of him? What is done for him? Let him die like a dog!

X

THE TWO PROFILES OF M. BONAPARTE

The curious part of it is that they are desirous of being respected; a general is venerable, a minister is sacred. The Countess d'Andl – , a young woman of Brussels, was at Paris in March, 1852, and was one day in a salon in Faubourg Saint-Honoré when M. de P. entered. Madame d'Andl – , as she went out, passed before him, and it happened that, thinking probably of something else, she shrugged her shoulders. M. de P. noticed it; the following day Madame d'Andl – was apprised, that henceforward, under pain of being expelled from France like a representative of the people, she must abstain from every mark of approbation or disapprobation when she happened to meet a minister.

Under this corporal-government, and under this countersign-constitution, everything proceeds in military form. The French people consult the order of the day to know how they must get up, how they must go to bed, how they must dress, in what toilette they may go to the sitting of the court, or to the soirée of the prefect; they are forbidden to make mediocre verses; to wear beards; the frill and the white cravat are laws of state. Rule, discipline, passive obedience, eyes cast down, silence in the ranks; such is the yoke under which bows at this moment the nation of initiative and of liberty, the great revolutionary France. The reformer will not stop until France shall be enough of a barrack for the generals to exclaim: "Good!" and enough of a seminary for the bishops to say: "That will do!"

Do you like soldiers? they are to be found everywhere. The Municipal Council of Toulouse gives in its resignation; the Prefect Chapuis-Montlaville replaces the mayor by a colonel, the first deputy by a colonel, and the second deputy by a colonel.³² Military men take the inside of the sidewalk. "The soldiers," says Mably, "considering themselves in the place of the citizens who formerly made the consuls, the dictators, the censors, and the tribunes, associated with the government of the emperors a species of military democracy." Have you a shako on your head? then do what you please. A young man returning from a ball, passed through Rue de Richelieu before the gate of the National Library; the sentinel took aim at him and killed him; the journals of the following morning said: "The young man is dead," and there it ended. Timour Bey granted to his companions-in-arms, and to their descendants to the seventh generation, impunity for all crimes whatsoever, provided the delinquent had not committed a crime nine times. The sentinel of Rue Richelieu has, therefore, eight citizens more to kill before he can be brought before a court-martial. It is a good thing to be a soldier, but not so good to be a citizen. At the same time, however, this unfortunate army is dishonoured. On the 3rd of December, they decorated the police officers who arrested its representatives and its generals; though it is equally true that the soldiers themselves received two louis per man. Oh, shame on every side! money to the soldiers, and the cross to the police spies!

Jesuitism and corporalism, this is the sum total of the regime. The whole political theory of M. Bonaparte is composed of two hypocrisies – a military hypocrisy towards the army, a catholic hypocrisy towards the clergy. When it is not *Fracasse* it is *Basile*. Sometimes it is both together. In this manner he succeeded wonderfully in duping at the same time Montalembert, who does not believe in France, and Saint-Arnaud who does not believe in God.

Does the Dictator smell of incense? Does he smell of tobacco? Smell and see. He smells of both tobacco and incense. Oh, France! what a government is this! The spurs pass by beneath the cassock. The *coup d'état* goes to mass, thrashes the civilians, reads its breviary, embraces Catin, tells its beads, empties the wine pots, and takes the sacrament. The *coup d'état* asserts, what is doubtful, that we have gone back to the time of the *Jacqueries*; but this much is certain, that it takes us back to the time of the Crusades. Cæsar goes crusading for the Pope. *Diex el volt*.

³² These three colonels are MM. Cailhassou, Dubarry and Policarpe.

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