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LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE EMPEROR OF THE FRENCH.

(*Concluded.*)

Towards the close of the year 1845, his father the Comte de St. Leu, now arrived at the verge, of life begged permission to bid his son farewell ere he absolutely entered upon the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The Prince, apprised of this, joined his father in appealing to the clemency of the French Government; and, in a letter to the Minister of the Interior, pledged his honour, if he were allowed to go to Florence, where the Comte de St Leu resided, to return and place himself at the disposal of the Government, whenever he should be desired to do so. The Ministry declared itself incompetent to entertain this request, on the ground that its consideration, in the prerogative of mercy, belonged to the King alone. Louis Napoleon then addressed himself to Louis Philippe in a letter modest and dignified, and in no sense unworthy of a Prince. The endeavour was made to induce him to add to his request a final renunciation of his pretensions. He refused; the negotiations therefore fell dead. To seize what could not be given, to endeavour to win by fair stratagem what he could not effect by honourable treaty was, of course, the natural alternative; and thus it was won, on the 25th of May, 1846, three months after the decision of the Government was communicated to the Prince by M. Barrot.

The Prince, disguised as a carpenter, with a plank on his shoulder, contrived to escape from the fortress, and reached Belgium in safety.

Assured that the Prince had passed the walls, Dr. Conneau endeavoured to conceal his departure, with the view to protract his chance of escape. To gain at least twenty-four hours was the doctor's object, and by a succession of little manœuvres, Dr. Conneau hoped to preserve the secret of the Prince's absence to the next day. Dr. Conneau, whose schemes involved his own arrest, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment, Thelin to six months. The commandant was also arrested, but upon trial acquitted.

London again received an imperial refugee. Residence in England, however, was, at best, but a secondary object; and the more important one was defeated. The Austrian ambassador at London, Count Dietrichstein, refused to sign his passport to the Italian States; and the Comte de St. Leu died in July of the same year, uncheered by the presence of his son. The ingenuity which found means to escape from a garrisoned prison to liberty, and the boldness which carried those means into effect, failed either to discover or to pursue a path through a free country to the blessings of a father's death-bed.

We turn to another chapter in this momentous life. Tuesday, the 22d of February, 1848, having been appointed by members of the Opposition for the celebration of a grand Reform banquet in Paris; on the preceding evening a proclamation was issued by the Prefect of Police forbidding it. The Reformers succumbed.—Notices were issued postponing the banquet, and a revolution was celebrated instead. Barricades were thrown up, the National Guard, fraternising with the people, decided the event, as a question of force, and in, three days the king had fled and France was a republic. A provisional Government was established on the 23d, and the new order of government formally declared in the Place de la Bastille on the 27th of February.

To the Bonaparte family these events were, of course, of the utmost importance. Their proscription was now virtually abrogated, and several members of the family returned immediately to Paris to do homage to the republic. Of these Louis Napoleon was not the last nor the least loyal. On the 28th, he addressed a very patriotic letter to the provisional Government, announcing his return from exile, "to range myself under the flag of the republic you have just proclaimed. Without any ambition but that of serving my country, I come to announce my arrival to the members of the provisional Government, and to assure them of my devotion to the cause they represent, and of my personal sympathy."

But upon these protestations the Governmnet looked with suspicion. Fearful that his presence in Paris would disturb the elections, by representations more or less urgent, they persuaded the Prince to quit France—at least, until the constitution had been voted and the law established. Nor was this all; justifiably or not, their precautions did not end here. It was proposed in the Assembly, a few weeks after the elections, to exclude Louis Napoleon alone, of all the family of the Emperor, from the rights of citizenship. Thus pointedly singled out, the Prince lost no time in addressing a protest to the members of the National Assembly.

The Deputies refused to listen to this communication, though letters from two Princes of the Orleans family, their more recent enemy, had previously enjoyed the indulgence of the Chamber.

An under-current of opinion now flowed manifest, and soon floated the nephew of the Emperor into a position beyond the reach of the Assembly. Bonapartism had long been the cherished creed of large masses of the people. Unsolicited, and though in more than one instance he declined to be nominated at the previous elections, Louis Napoleon was chosen by very large majorities to represent the several departments of the Seine (Paris), the Yonne, and Charente Inferieure.

On Monday, the 12th of June, as early as 12 o'clock, crowds collected in all the approaches to the National Assembly, expecting that Louis Napoleon would that evening take his seat. The *generale* and the *rappel* were beaten, troops of the line and the National Guard were called out, and all the symptoms of disorder, as it is in Paris, threatened to break forth. The Government, warned by the throngs which for several evenings past had brawled upon the Boulevards, were not unprepared for an event of this kind. A decree against *attroupemens* had been passed, by virtue of which, on the Saturday evening previous, several hundred people were swept off to the Prefecture in a *razzia* made upon the crowds there assembled. Paris and the surrounding villages were occupied by troops, cavalry, and infantry; while the fort and castle of Vincennes were crowded with artillery, ammunition, and soldiers of the line. Those devices, however, were insufficient to deter the people from mobbing the very walls of the Senate; and although it was repeatedly proclaimed by the friends of the Prince that he was not in Paris, they showed no disposition to disperse, but, broken into groups, vehemently debated the admission of the new Deputy into the Assembly.

At length the Government determined to oppose strong measures against the mob. A large force, comprised of troops of the line, the National Guards, and the Garde Mobile, with several pieces of artillery, were already stationed round the Chamber; and, about 5 o'clock, regiments of cavalry and infantry crossed the bridge opposite the Palace of the Assembly, formed a junction with the National Guards already on the Place de la Revolution, and in five minutes swept off the huge assemblage that occupied it at the point of the bayonet. Having cleared the Place, a troop of dragoons advanced upon the Rue Royal towards the Boulevards, driving the people before them, while a large body of the Gardes Mobiles, beating the *pas de charge*, moved rapidly along the rues de Rivoli, Castiglione and la Paix, to the same point. A few shots were fired, but the people offered no resistance, shouting, however, as they ran, "Vive l'Empereur!" "Vive Louis Napoleon!" with great determination and vigour.

Meanwhile the Chamber held its usual sitting. But towards evening, news was brought, that the soldiers were charging the people in all directions, the effect of which was to suspend the sitting for a time. It was virtually re-opened by M. de Lamartine, who, rushing into the tribune, cried, "Blood has been shed, shots have been fired here at hand, and the cry is raised, 'Vive l'Empereur Napoleon.' A law should at once be passed to put a stop to this!" The proposition was met by acclamation; and M. de Lamartine then read a decree, which had been providently prepared beforehand by the Cabinet, confirming the exclusion of Louis Napoleon.

Though great acclamation ensued upon the reading of the decree, it does not appear to have been regularly voted before the members returned to business more personal in a measure of confidence against the Ministry.

The events of the following day, however, showed the importance of decision of some sort. In the morning, a similar display of military force was found necessary to meet the populace again congregated about the National Assembly. Sixteen guns were planted round the walls; and the cavalry several times charged upon the people, and, for then once, dispersed them. Some attempts to erect barricades failed; but so decided were the chances of general tumult, that, upon the meeting of the Chamber, one of the Questeurs proposed, that the project of law relative to Louis Napoleon should have immediate precedence. And now Louis Napoleon Bonaparte first exhibited that tact, that talent for biding his time, which seemed to be his greatest need in the "day of small things." The electors of three important departments having unsolicitedly chosen him, the people having risen to support his right to accept office, and the Assembly compelled, by popular will, to concede the right—Louis Napoleon thus placed the Government in helpless opposition to the electors, and the large portion of the people who sided with them.

Now arose the tumults which ended by transferring the chief power to General Cavaignac; but these events were disappointing in their first course to Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. Neither they nor the sudden ascendancy of Cavaignac were found to affect the progress of his fortunes. The electors of Corsica had now almost unanimously chosen him, and on the 8th of July, he addressed another letter to the new President of the Assembly (the third of the same character within a month), declaring that he was prepared again to sacrifice himself to the safety of the Republic. The new elections were now approaching, and one could not say, what might be evolved in their course which might render his acceptance of Corsica premature. They were fixed by the National Assembly to take place on the 17th of September.

Exhausted by the murderous conflict of June, there was hope no longer that the people could be excited to renew their clamour in favour of the Emperor's nephew; and he became as "anxious to take his seat with the representatives," if only soberly elected, as he was resolute before in declining the honour. The result was certainly most triumphant to him. He was returned for Paris (department of the Seine) by 110,752 votes; for the Yonne, by 42,686 votes; and for the Moselle, the Charente Inferieure and Corsica by large majorities.

Consequently, at the opening of the sitting of the 25th October, the Prince appeared in the Assembly, amidst much agitation, and took his seat on the benches of the left. The reporters of the various departments for which he had been chosen then mounted the tribune, and Louis Napoleon was proclaimed Representative.

The 10th of December was fixed for the Presidential election; and Louis Napoleon immediately after issued an elaborate address to the people.

The elections took place in due course on the 10th of December; and if any doubt existed hitherto, and considerable doubt did exist, as to the popularity of Bonapartist views, the results of that election were sufficient to dispel them for ever. It is vain, and serves no good purpose, since it does not serve the truth, to speak of hired emissaries and propagandists. No machinery of that kind ever yet perverted, or ever can pervert an unwilling people into voting a ruler into power by a majority so immense as declared in favour of Louis Napoleon. By the free-will of the people, he was undoubtedly elected. He received nearly six millions of votes.

The year 1851 was inaugurated by the deepening infatuation of political parties, and, more ominous yet, the dismissal of General Changarnier from the command of the army of Paris. It would be a matter of history, rather than biography to recal the struggle for the revision of the Constitution.

Proclamations, posted on every wall by dawn of morning on the 2d of December, evinced that affairs had changed. Troops filled the city before its inhabitants were well awake; Generals Changarnier, Cavaignac, Lamoriciere, Leflo, and Bedean, with Colonel Charras, M. M. Thiers, Lagrange, and other less influential persons, but numerous enough to be counted by the score, were arrested; and the proclamations were posted, the troops were disposed, and every arrest was made, in less than two dark hours of a winter morning. The people become broad awake, declared the *coup* of the President to be very clever, and returned to their business—for that evening, at least; many of the troops, too, were returned to their barracks.

The day did not pass over, however, without protest. A large body of the members of the Assembly hurried to take their seats upon the first rumour of the *coup d'etat*, but found the doors guarded by Chasseurs de Vincennes. The members demanded admission, the soldiers refused it at the points of their bayonets. The representatives then retired to the *mairie* of the tenth arrondissement, where they decreed Louis Napoleon to be deprived of all authority, enjoined the citizens to withold their obedience, and called upon the High Court of Judicature to proceed against the President and his accomplices. This decree was signed by nearly 250 representatives. But the attempt proved futile; for scarcely were the signatures all summed when a body of troops appeared at the door, and the representatives were called upon to disperse. They refused to do so, but allowed themselves all to be taken to prison; and in a few days were conveyed, some to the fortress of Mont Valerein, some to Mazas, and the remainder to Vincennes. Thus ended the Assemblee Nationale; and, unhappily, we are denied the consolation of adding that it departed public life at all lamented.

Various unimportant collisions had taken place in the course of this day (the 3rd); but it was the richest in the promise of mischief, which was amply redeemed on the morrow. It is needless to describe the details of the carnage of this day—the sickening repetition of a sickening tale. Barricades were erected at an early hour in every available or advantageous position throughout Paris; and against these and those who defended them (many of them, as usual, boys), full 30,000 men were employed for hours, with all the exasperation of street warfare. No mercy was shown by the soldiery, for the soldiery were assassinated at every opportunity.

All this occurred on the 4th, and on the 4th the contest virtually ended.

With the expatriation of at least 4,000 men, the labours of Louis Napoleon were now finished; and with the termination of this contest terminated all opposition to his will: from that day to this his will has been the will of France. On the 3rd of December, a decree was issued, convoking the people in their various electoral districts to accept or reject the following "plebescite:"—"The French people wills the maintenance of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's authority, and delegates to him the powers necessary to frame a Constitution on the basis of his proclamation of the 2d of December." The franchise was extended to all freemen of 21 years of age. The ballot took place on the 20th and 21st of December, and the result,, as officially announced, stood thus:—Affirmative votes, 7,432,219; negative, 640,737. The suffrages of the army were separately computed, and were, of course decidedly affirmative; not so of the votes of Algeria, which were unfavourable to the President's pretensions. By this plebescite Louis Napoleon was elected President for ten years.

The personal history of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte is now summed up in a few words. Restored to more than his original authority, it soon became apparent to all the world that it was only a means to the further aim—an aim kept constantly in sight from the beginning—the restoration of the Empire. For a long time, Louis Napoleon played coyly about the subject. Apart from motives of internal policy, the Empire was a delicate subject to introduce into his foreign relations; it long remained doubtful whether he could have been acknowledged under such an assumption by the other Continental Powers. But by patience, and prudence, and good fortune, all obstacles to his ambition were removed in the course of a single year; and, ratified by 8,000,000 of voters, the Empire was proclaimed, and exists.

The Marriage of the Emperor, the latest event in his life of any importance, must not be omitted from this chronicle.

On the 22d of January, 1853, the Emperor announced to the Senate his intention of taking to himself the Countess Teba, a Spanish lady, of noble, but not of Royal descent.

The civil ceremony was performed at the Tuileries on the evening of Saturday, the 29th of January, and ratified by the Church on the following day with great pomp.