Chapter Two

1831: The First Visit

THE four refugees crossed the Channel from Calais to Dover aboard the steamship *Royal George* on Tuesday 10 May.[1] The poor weather they had experienced in Paris worsened during the crossing and all were seasick, with Hortense suffering the most and remaining in their carriage on deck while the others went below. As Louis Napoleon disembarked – cold, wet, and sick – he perhaps felt that every prejudice he held against England had been confirmed; as the natives were unable to fully understand his idiosyncratic approximation of their tongue, doubtless he also felt confirmed in every prejudice against the English.

The party reached Canterbury and lodged at the Falstaff Hotel on St Dunstan's Street, north of the town through Westgate. From their window they could see Westgate House, the Georgian headquarters of the Whig candidates for the Western Division of Kent, Thomas Hodges and Thomas Rider, who were fighting on the issue of the Reform Bill. Hortense declared herself in favour of the Tories; Louis Napoleon the Whigs. On Wednesday morning the rain stopped and they left for London. Discussion on every topic inspired by the new country became animated as the coach made its way up the old Roman road, and by the time they reached the capital the sun was shining.

The refugees had no permanent place to go of course, and initially they stayed in a hotel that would become closely associated with the Bonaparte story in England. Fenton's Hotel, with its eponymous owner and manager Francis Fenton, was situated at 63 St James's Street, Westminster, and may have been recommended to Hortense by Joseph Bonaparte, who had stayed there. However, she did not at first reveal their true identity, and explained to Fenton that they had arrived at Portsmouth directly from Malta. She examined the rooms on offer, but was not impressed. Although the hotel was in a very fashionable part of London its rooms were small, very stuffy, and smoked poorly due to the badly designed chimneys; they were also sparsely furnished with no writing tables. Nevertheless, they lodged at Fenton's for two days and nights, Hortense taking a room on the first floor, Louis Napoleon and Masuyer above her, and Thélin on the uppermost floor, the fourth. In addition to the general complaints, the cost of the stay, £4 daily, was considered too high for what they were getting, and Hortense spent the time looking for better accommodation, communicating with a few select friends in secret while Louis Napoleon remained in bed. She was not wholly successful, but managed to find rooms in a house on Holles Street, running south from Cavendish Square to Oxford Street.

Hortense then felt secure enough to reveal their presence to her wider circle of friends in London. The most prominent of these were the Foxes of Holland House. An entirely new kind of person had emerged in England during the Napoleonic Era, known to history as the 'Napoleonists', whose headquarters had been, and still were, at Holland House in Kensington, and whose principal spokesman had been the statesman Charles James Fox. 'It is rather odd that he is more republican than me in France and I more than him in England',[2] noted Fox's nephew, Baron Holland, and this explained why Fox lost much of his faith when Napoleon declared himself emperor of the French, and why Lord Holland never lost his qualified faith in the 'Disturber of the World'.

The occupants of Holland House had met Napoleon during the Peace of Amiens in 1802. Lord and Lady Holland spent one month in Paris from 19 August and were joined at the end of it by Charles James. Lord Holland and his uncle dined with the First Consul on 2 September, and he met him again three days later when Lady Holland was introduced. Napoleon then became Lady Holland's 'dear man' until 1815, after which he became her 'poor, dear man'. By 1831 Charles James Fox had been dead for a quarter of a century, but Lord and Lady Holland were still the acknowledged upholders of the progressive Whiggism of an earlier age.

Lord Holland's eldest son,Henry, had met Hortense in Rome in 1827 when they had become immediate friends, and two years later he spent several days at Arenenberg where he met Louis Napoleon. He now engaged for him the services of Sir Henry Holland (not related) of 25 Lower Brook Street, former personal physician to Queen Caroline, who later described the event:

> I was one day summoned hastily to a house in Holles Street, and found there a young man suffering under severe gastric fever, and a lady hanging over his bed. This was Prince Louis Napoleon, with his mother Queen Hortense – just arrived from Paris, and the illness of the Prince seriously aggravated by the conditions of a secret and anxious journey through a country interdicted to him and his family. His recovery, the result of a good constitution and great calmness of temper, was more rapid than I at first expected …[3]

Hortense continued to administer the ineffectual 'medicines' Holland prescribed and Henry Fox procured. Although Louis Napoleon was advised to rest, conditions in Holles Street were such that the invalid had to be moved to a place where he could have a greater measure of privacy, and the others some space. At last, on Saturday 14, Hortense found a suitable address, 30 St George's Street, Hanover Square, which Henry Holland had probably recommended to her, since number 29 next door was occupied by George Hyde, a physician he knew. This was a distinguished early eighteenth-century building that suited them perfectly, although Hortense had to sell some jewellery to pay the rent.

Louis Napoleon spent much of his time throughout May and June walking through central London 'seeing the lions', either alone or with his mother 'as much as the feeble health of us both permitted'. They walked along the 'beautiful pavements' (there were precious few in Paris at the time), admiring the 'magnificent lighting' and the 'elegant gardens of this immense town'.[4]

Louis Napoleon was greatly interested in the architecture of the late Georgian city. He became particularly fascinated by Regent Street, time and again taking the opportunity to walk up and down its entire length. It would be suggested subsequently that his experience of Regent Street planted the seed of an idea in his mind that would germinate in Paris two decades later in conjunction with Baron Haussmann. It is true that this extraordinary street, designed by John Nash in 1811 for the benefit of the Prince Regent and completed in 1826, was the first purposeful road to cut through London's congested city centre, linking his private house with his private park. However, Napoleon had already carved much of the rue de Rivoli out of central Paris by 1815, and it is hardly likely that Louis Napoleon did not know this even if he had not seen the street by 1831.

Nevertheless, it is equally unlikely that Regent Street had no influence on him at all. The fact that a part of it was curved was due to problems with appropriating certain properties, and not for æsthetic reasons – if Nash had had his way it would have been straight throughout. But it was also one of the principal shopping streets in London, and, when no longer required to disguise their identities, mother and son

entered its shops where they were often recognized. As Hortense put it, 'a simple artisan' would give his hand to Louis Napoleon and say 'we are your friends now'.[5]

To what extent had this 'simple artisan' spoken the truth? Edward Bulwer-Lytton, the novelist and Whig member for St Ives in Huntingdonshire, was preparing a manuscript on the state of England and character of the English. It would be dedicated and directly addressed to Talleyrand in which he informed his Excellency that 'The English of the present day are not the English of twenty years ago', and '*we no longer hate the French'*.[6]

Certainly England was in political turmoil in 1831. Napoleon's enemies – principally the governing Tories and the ruling landed aristocracy – had also been the enemies of the Whigs and Radicals whose attenuated opposition up to 1815 had been a political necessity at a time of war. But, like many political leaders who fare tolerably well in times of war, after Napoleon's fall Lord Liverpool and his Cabinet, in office since 1812, had been incompetent to conduct the peace in the face of a now unrestrained attack, resorting to violent measures to maintain order within an increasingly agitated and burgeoning working population. When, in November 1830, William IV invited Grey to form the first non-Tory administration since Lord Grenville's Whig-dominated coalition – the 'Ministry of All the Talents' – nearly a quarter of a century earlier, enthusiasm for change became unchecked. In December, for example, nearly 300 men were tried at Winchester Assizes for machine-breaking and general rioting, and two of them were executed.

Riots became commonplace, reaching a new level of intensity in 1831. There were major disturbances at Merthyr Tydvil where several iron-workers were shot by the army on 3 June; in the Forest of Dean where the boundary wall was demolished by thousands of protestors five days later; and also at Nottingham in October during which the castle was set alight. But perhaps the worst riot took place in Bristol, over three days also in October, in protest against the ultra-Tory city recorder, Sir Charles Wetherell, a bitter opponent of parliamentary reform. The mob ran through the city setting light to public and private buildings alike, destroying almost a hundred properties – civil, ecclesiastical, and private – before order was restored by cavalry charges.

How close Louis Napoleon came to witnessing a revolution in 1831 is a moot point, but the level of dissatisfaction in England with the ruling elite did not escape his attention. Although unknown and unquantifiable, this atmosphere and its possible effects on his political attitudes bear some consideration. In February, Colonel William Napier had written:

> Reform must be granted or civil war will ensue … It is really time to do something; my heart is sick at seeing the miserable children starving in the streets, and the squalid wretches that are spread in all parts crying for food, amid the rolling of carriages and the most insulting and selfish luxury, which rich people seem to pride themselves in displaying.[7]

William Napier and his brother Charles were that curious dichotic product of the Napoleonic Wars – Radical Patriots and Revolutionary Sons of the Establishment. In their youth they had despised George III and the Prince Regent, and then in middle age what they saw as the timorous, vacillating, and hypocritical Whiggism of Lord Melbourne. The Napiers were celebrated military heroes but they were not wealthy, and William could not stand for parliament in the spring of 1831 to support the Reform Bill because he could not afford to do so, members being of course still unpaid. This meant that only the wealthy could enter parliament and vote, and they

were clearly less likely to do so for the reform of the system that might exclude them from office by increasing the largely unsympathetic electoral base.

William Napier was petitioned by radicals to lead a Revolutionary Militia that would overturn the structure of the country. At about the time Louis Napoleon arrived, Melbourne's private secretary (Melbourne was then at the Home Office) wrote to him suggesting he be made commander of what was claimed to be an army of 50,000 men formed by the Radical reformer Francis Place. But Napier would not tolerate such disloyalty and could not bring himself to disrupt the nation by violent means. He firmly rejected the proposal, even though doing so caused him considerable inner torment. However, without such a man at its head the Revolutionary Militia had no chance of success and it soon faded away.

Also at the time of Louis Napoleon's arrival, William IV had dissolved Parliament in order for Lord Grey to be returned with a substantial majority as a ploy to flaunt a mandate for the Reform Bill, which was struggling very uneasily on its long path through the House. It must have been gratifying for the Foxes, who had tried so sincerely though vainly to help Napoleon, to find themselves in a position to help the 'poor, dear man's' nephew. Hortense was invited by Lord Holland – summoned by Grey to the Cabinet post of chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster – to meet Lady Grey at Holland House. However, it is very unlikely that it was Louis Napoleon himself who inspired this attitude among the Foxes, or any other liberal or Radical English. Rather, on the one hand it was the undoubted charm and personality of Hortense, and on the other the cold fact that to display a liking for Napoleon, or the Bonapartes, was to do more than merely cock snooks at the Establishment – it was to align oneself with its most fervent opposition.

When Louis Napoleon was not traipsing around London he was in bed, and he barely seems to have made an impression on anyone at this time. He made one serious attempt to enter official society by becoming a member of Almack's Assembly Rooms (Willis's Rooms) on King Street, St James's Square. This exclusive club had opened in 1765, its chief curiosity being that it specialized as a dance hall for the *élite,* while entry after 1815 was vetted by seven lady patrons who ruled it entirely according to their own personal whims: Princess Dorothea Lieven, wife of the Russian ambassador; Countess Cowper, sister to Lord Melbourne; Princess Eszterházy, wife of the Austrian ambassador; the countess of Jersey, mother of the future earl of Westmorland whom Louis Napoleon would befriend; the Baroness Willoughby de Eresby; and the countess of Sefton. Viscountess Castlereagh, the seventh original patroness, had died two years previously.

By 1835, these six*grandes dames* of the Napoleonic Era had either died or retired and Almack's entered a more egalitarian last phase of its life. But in 1831 Louis Napoleon's entry into it was more significant than the silence of the contemporary press implied. Wellington had been turned away at the door for wearing trousers, while the duchess of Bedford was refused entry altogether; but most things Continental – particularly French – were welcomed. The waltz, quadrille, and the polka were first introduced into England through Almack's, and Louis Napoleon had little difficulty being introduced the same way, being sponsored by a willing patroness according to the rule.

It is interesting that his proposal came from Lady Cowper. Palmerston, known for good reason as 'Lord Cupid', was also a member of Almack's and almost certainly her lover, as possibly he had also been, successively, of Princess Lieven and Lady Jersey. In 1839 he would marry Lady Cowper after her husband's death, but how much he influenced her decision in 1831 is unfortunately not known.

Serious social and political introductions were more likely elsewhere. It was Henry Fox who brought Hortense and Louis Napoleon to the attention of Holland House on their arrival, and Lord Holland arranged for both of them to meet Lord Grey on 17 June. This resulted in the first, rather garbled and inaccurate, mention of Louis Napoleon in the English press: 'Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, second son of Louis Bonaparte, has arrived in London, and is staying with his mother, Hortensia, Duchess of St Leu, formerly Queen of Holland. Also Achilles Murat, son of Murat, is in town, and these three eminent foreigners paid on Friday a visit to Earl Grey'.[8]

This meeting was a *pro forma* visit following the Marquis de Montrond's previous communication with Hortense that the French ambassador – since September 1830 the survivor Talleyrand – had been making unpleasant noises concerning her possible ulterior motives for her arrival in England. Talleyrand had been informed of it in advance, and naturally Hortense had wished to see him at the French embassy in Portland Place; but Talleyrand had refused, using Montrond, his 'man-of-all-work', as an intermediary. Nevertheless, Talleyrand at first accepted assurances of her benign intentions in England, and the sympathetic Grey administration did not interfere with the Bonapartes' stay.

Lady Grey, the daughter of a major-general killed at Waterloo, took to Hortense immediately and the feeling was mutual; they were to meet several times over the following weeks. Hortense also had another friend from her youth, the duchess of Bedford. In 1802, Lady Georgina Gordon, as she then was, had been taken to France by her mother, also during the Peace of Amiens, where she had been strongly attracted to Hortense's brother Eugène, aide-de-camp to Napoleon; but the First Consul firmly opposed any idea of a match. Returning to England, the following year she married the duke of Bedford, whose family had possessed Woburn Abbey since 1547. In this position the duchess was able to introduce the Bonapartes to families other than the Foxes. At one of her luncheon parties given at the family mansion on Belgrave Square – causing Hortense to observe that 'at this time London is so brilliant that Paris society cannot match it'[9] – she and Louis Napoleon were invited to Woburn, and from Monday 27 June three days were spent at the 3,000 acre estate.

They covered the forty-two miles in well under four hours, averaging about twelve miles an hour, a speed Masuyer described as 'the fastest in the world'.[10] What Louis Napoleon thought of this occasion he did not reveal, but Hortense, at least, was pleased with what she saw: 'The Duchess of Bedford did the honours in her house with the best possible grace … She showed me her village, her school, her hospital; in short I saw everything pleasurable that wealth can offer, above all the good deeds that she spreads'.[11]

Two other society ladies played an important part in Louis Napoleon's life during the first visit. The countess of Glengall had also met Hortense during the Peace of Amiens, and she was the first to visit her in England, at Fenton's Hotel, on 13 May when Hortense's identity was still secret. The countess's favourite conversation piece was Napoleon's jailer Sir Hudson Lowe. She delighted in bringing Hortense and Louis Napoleon up to date on how Lowe had been ostracised in England, and how he had recently returned from Ceylon where he had been refused the governorship as a means of escape from opprobrium at home.

Lady Christine Stuart also paid the Bonapartes a visit at Fenton's Hotel, she being the second daughter of Lucien Bonaparte by his first marriage to Christine Boyer. In 1824 she had married as her second husband Lord Stuart, son of the marquess of Bute by his second wife, a daughter of the Radical politician Sir Francis Burdett. At this time Lord Stuart had some direct influence, being Whig member for Arundel.

Lady Holland, the countess of Glengall, the duchess of Bedford, and Lady Stuart were among the most sought-after hostesses in England at this time, but it must not be thought that the life of the Bonapartes in London was entirely devoted to superficial social intercourse. Hortense explained that she could have taken up invitations that would have kept her busy every day had she wished, but most of them she refused: 'The pleasures that the world had offered me were too out of touch with the state of my soul'.[12]

In any event, Louis Napoleon was neither expected at every social event to which Hortense had been invited nor present at all those she accepted. An important exception was on July 8 at Holland House, the day following Lord Grey's triumphal but expected return to office. It was, of course, a celebration party, and Hortense and Louis Napoleon were invited to rejoice along with the duchess of Bedford and several members of Grey's Cabinet. These included Lord John Russell, younger brother of the duke of Bedford, as recently summoned paymaster-general, and the earl of Carlisle as the Cabinet's minister without office.

Also present was the celebrated artist David Wilkie, appointed painter-in-ordinary to William IV and at this time working on a portrait of George IV for Wellington as well as a monumental work, *The Preaching of Knox before the Lords of the Congregation, 10th June, 1559*, on panel for Sir Robert Peel. According to his own testimony, he was so involved with them that his correspondence and diary virtually stopped for this particular year, and regrettably he had neither the energy nor the inclination to record his impressions.

Louis Napoleon preferred to spend his time either alone in his room or in the streets among the populace. Of the several public entertainments he witnessed the most important personally, although certainly not culturally, was described in the press as a 'historical military spectacle' called *Napoleon Buonaparte, Captain of Artillery, General and First Consul, Emperor and Exile*, produced by the playwright and theatre musician Rophino Lacy. Lacy had a special reason to do this, having been a violinist of merit who had once played before Napoleon in 1804, earning for himself the epithet *Le petit Espagnol,* since although his mother was Irish his father was Spanish. It was a spectacular production, freely adapted (this was before International Copyright) from *Bonaparte, lieutenant d'artillerie* running in Paris at the same time, that went to considerable trouble to represent the principal events in Napoleon's career with impressive realism.

The show opened at Covent Garden Theatre on 16 May, and Louis Napoleon went immediately to see it. Hortense stayed away, claiming that her poor command of English would be an impediment to full enjoyment. If this was the truth she was quite mistaken, as the work demanded no more talent from its audience than a pair of good working eyes and some stamina. But possibly she thought that the sight of even an actor playing Napoleon would be too much for her; certainly it turned out to be almost too much for her son. The monumental complexity of the production can be judged from the full layout of the parts:

1. The camp before Toulon, 1793.
2. Passage of Mount St Bernard. 'Buonaparte appears on his celebrated charger and rides half-way up the rock, the curtain falling just as he assumes that position which the picture, respecting this event, has made universally popular'.
3. May 1809. Palace of Schönbrunn.
4. 1814. Bridge of Montereau.
5. 1814. Courtyard of Fontainebleau.
6. Victoria's Rustic Cottage and her Vision-Dream (shewn in 9 parts).

    I Buonaparte at the Siege of Toulon.

II Buonaparte at the Bridge of Arcole.
III Buonaparte crossing the Alps.
IV Buonaparte, Emperor.
V The Lure of Austerlitz.
VI The Victory of Austerlitz.
VII The Burning of Moscow
VIII Napoleon in the *Northumberland* sailing to the Rock of St Helena.
IX Napoleon's Death-Bed.

7. St Helena, 1818 and 1821. 'The resolution which he takes to confine himself at Longwood, the decay of his health, and his last moments, and described with a tedious and painful minuteness'.
8. The whole to conclude with the celebrated picture of *The Apotheosis of Napoleon* by Horace Vernet. [13]

As a vulgar symptom of the Napoleonic Legend, the effect of Lacy's production was startling. The spectacle was designed to build up to a suitable climax, which it achieved by having the popular actor James Warde ride up on a set of stage rocks on a white charger, assuming the sententious pose of Jacques David's horse and rider from his by then celebrated painting of 1800, *Bonaparte Crossing the Saint Bernard*. A wind machine ensured that Warde's cloak fluttered in the appropriate Cæserian manner while Warde himself was made up with great attention to detail. At the moment when the curtain went down it was reported that the entire audience gasped audibly before demonstrating their appreciation with wild enthusiasm, including stamping and whistling. Of course most people even in Paris had never seen David's original painting, and by 1831 it was known only through various engravings of questionable merit. The example by Horace Vernet was at least one of the artistically less offensive of these.

The effect the production had on Louis Napoleon was little short of devastating. When he returned home that night he was seen to be almost contorted with emotion, and everyone noticed that he had been weeping. On Saturday 4 June, he went for a second time, a performance also witnessed by two members of the British royal family: Princess Augusta of Hanover accompanied by Sir Benjamin Stephenson, her gentleman-in-attendance, and her sister the Landgravine of Hesse-Homburg.

On 21 May, Niccolò Paganini should have given his debut London concert at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. The violin virtuoso had left Paris under a cloud, surrounded by malicious slander appropriate to his characterization as Satan Incarnate. However, his notorious inability to play for less than ten times the amount charged by anybody else meant that one postponement had followed another, aided and abetted by his concert promoter. But this was good for him since the embittered and exited press, and the frustrated audience, swelled the atmosphere of expectation and increased the bohemian kudos of the artist.

At last, however, the date for the long-awaited debut concert seemed to be settled. The duchess of Bedford – a long-standing box patron at the theatre – offered her tickets to the Bonapartes and the two Murat brothers and their American wives who were also visiting London from America, where they had been settled since escaping with their father Joachim to Joseph's estate in 1822. Achille Murat, the eldest child of Caroline Bonaparte and Joachim, had married Catherine Gray, a young widow and great-grandniece of George Washington; Lucien Murat had married Caroline Fraser, daughter of a southern plantation owner of Scottish origin.

But Paganini, finding the seat prices again unacceptably low, cancelled the performance – and at the very last minute. Instead of the devilish genius from Genoa, the Bonapartes and Murats, and many others who had arranged to attend, including Queen Adelaide, turned up to see the replacement programme. This was one of many

performances of Mayr's tragic opera *Medea in Corinto*, the story of the magician daughter of Æetes, king of Colchis, who fell in love with Jason, the hero of the Argonauts. The Italian soprano Guiditta Pasta took the title role with her compatriot the tenor Giovanni Rubini as Jason, in his London debut. The English soprano Fanny Ayton sang the role of Creusa, the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth, while Alberico Curioni and the Neapolitan bass Luigi Lablache completed the male cast.

Immediately after Mayr's opera, and as part of the*pot-pourri* style of presentation fashionable at the time, Louis Napoleon also saw Marie Taglioni in *Kenilworth*, a minor ballet of the day based on the 1821 novel of Elizabethan intrigue by Sir Walter Scott. In this she danced the Tyrolienne as a form of introduction and then again as an interlude. The Tyrolienne was a fast triple-metre dance and song-form popular in England since 1827 when the Tyrolean Rainer family toured throughout the country establishing a brief but intense fashion for Alpine peasant music and dances. Taglioni would become the new spirit in dance, setting the standard for the novel Romantic interpretation of movement, but unfortunately Louis Napoleon saw her one year too soon, as it was only after her father's production of *La Sylphide* at the Opéra in Paris the following March that the radical new style of costume and movement for which she would become famous was introduced. Nevertheless, Mayr's opera was one of his finest and was often staged in Europe at the time, while Pasta was considered to be possessed of the most lyrical of all soprano voices. The entire cast and production was first-rate, and the cultural value of this evening was certainly very high – but Paganini it was not.

Paganini gave twenty public concerts in London during Louis Napoleon's first visit, occasionally playing twice in one day. His reputation for parsimony and avarice may have been justified, but they did not prevent him from giving seven charity performances at the Hanover Square Rooms, and three more at the London Tavern on Bishopsgate Street. He also gave a number of private recitals, playing at Holland House on 21 June, and exclusively for the royal family at St James's Palace a week later.

The Bonapartes were able to catch up with him (also in June) when he played at a ball given by the duchess of St Albans in her home at 1 Stratton Street off Piccadilly. As a young woman she had been an actress of light roles before marrying the banker Thomas Coutts in 1815. After his death she married the duke of St Albans, becoming a very wealthy woman and a patron of the Arts. Rubini had also been invited, and the acknowledged *roi des ténors* and master of the violin performed arias from Bellini's *Il pirata* and Rossini's *La donna del lago*. In addition, Paganini played his *Sonate militaire e Non più andrai*, which was a set of variations on an aria from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* for violin and orchestra, and also his *Concerto* No 4.

On a less exalted level, Hortense and Louis Napoleon enjoyed lighter entertainment at the Adelphi Theatre in the Strand, where they saw a selection of *comédie-vaudeville*, the French satirical and epigrammatic style of presenting musical songs and comedy later appropriated and made toothless by the English music halls. It was at one of these shows that Louis Napoleon's attention wandered to another box and a rather *louche* girl who was equally busy looking at him. A signed note was delivered on her behalf to the Bonaparte house the following day, but Hortense objected strongly to what she already noticed as her son's curious attraction to flirtatious and 'unsuitable' women. On this occasion her maternal and regential wisdom prevailed and Louis Napoleon took no further action.

The pleasures London could make available to anyone in the 1830s were legion. Louis Napoleon's regular indulgence was to make solitary excursions to the Royal

Gardens in Vauxhall, situated between Vauxhall Walk and Kennington Lane on the south side of the Thames. Ironically, he would have reached it each time by walking across Waterloo Bridge, the new name for the Doric construction originally named the Strand Bridge but renamed at its inauguration on 18 June 1817 – the second anniversary of Waterloo – by the duke of Wellington.

This pleasure garden, one of fourteen providing various entertainments during the summer months of 1831, boasted finely decorated recessed alcoves in which cold collations could be taken while listening to violinists or singers, or while watching fireworks, ballooning, juggling, and other curious but innocent diversions, as well as, of course, far less innocent activities involving what was euphemistically referred to as 'goats and sheep'. The gardens also had an indoor Music Room decorated in the rococo style as well as an outdoor orchestral bandstand in the style of a mock-Moorish temple, large enough to stage opera. These pleasure gardens, which were a valuable cultural contribution particular to London, delighted Louis Napoleon; he would not have known anything quite like them. In this case there is no doubt that they partially inspired the future landscaped Bois de Boulogne on the outskirts of Paris – designed principally by Louis Napoleon.

If all these gentlemanly pastimes gave contemporaries the impression that Louis Napoleon was genuinely uninterested in a resolution to invest his name with revolution in 1831 that did not prevent others from approaching him in the belief that he would. When the countess of Glengall visited Hortense in Fenton's Hotel she informed her that two of Napoleon's natural sons were also in London. Comte Walewski dropped in on the Bonapartes at St George's Street to discuss Polish independence. He was half Polish himself, his mother being Countess Marie Walewska, one of Napoleon's intimates. Polish independence was an issue close to Louis Napoleon's heart, and Walewski had been in England at the request of the Polish authorities in exile to maintain pressure in London against the tsar.

Like Louis Napoleon, Comte Léon was also on his first brief visit to England. But unlike Walewski, his maternal parentage was not so elevated, a significant fact that would be the cause of great trouble for everyone in the future, but particularly for Louis Napoleon. Léon, who had been given at birth the second half of his father's unusual name, was the son of Louise Denuelle de la Plaigne, a rather sententious name for the relatively lowborn lady-in-waiting to Caroline Murat. In the middle of May the countess of Glengall – probably at Léon's request – sent an invitation to Hortense suggesting a family party with both Léon and Walewski, but she declined. Certainly it would have been a mistake for the two principal Bonapartes to be seen with Napoleon's by-blows in semi-secrecy.

Achille Murat had returned to Europe with ideas of forming a politically pan-denominational committee that would press for a genuine plebiscite in France on the form of government to be instituted once and for all. This was a radical and unprecedented proposal. It is true that Antoine Genoude, founder and editor of the Popular Legitimist paper *Gazette de France,* had pressed for a referendum in 1830, but his concern had been only to place the elder Bourbons onto the throne in place of Louis Philippe. What Murat wanted was an open appeal to the people of France as to which system altogether should be employed in France.

The idea appealed to Louis Napoleon to the extent that he allowed 'Comte' Lennox, proprietor of a minor and short-lived republican and anti-Orleanist newspaper in Paris, *La Révolution, journal des intérêts populaires,* which would publicize the idea, to send an emissary, an Italian refugee named Mirandoli, to him for assistance. Lennox, an American of Scottish parentage, had been a cadet at both St

Cyr and Saumur. After serving in the Imperial Guard he became an unsuccessful balloonist and Romantic Napoleonist, settling down in Paris where he supplied the funds for the paper, edited by Jean Fazy, Auguste Levasseur, Eugène Plagniol, and Anthony Thouret. This 'assistance', however, consisted in supplying Lennox with 25,000 francs every month to fund his paper, and much to Hortense's relief this was a sum Louis Napoleon simply could not raise. The scheme was quietly dropped.

Hortense was suspicious of the motives of everyone who approached them in London, and with considerable justification. Curiously, one of these was the Duchesse de Berry, widow of the assassinated heir. The two women had in fact met before, in Bavaria, and found that personal mutual attraction had overridden their political differences. She came up to London from her exile in Bath in order to meet Hortense and find out what, if anything, she and Louis Napoleon were up to, as she was then planning to put her own son Henri on the throne of France. The Bourbons, after all, also had their supporters in England: Valentine Elkins, the bookseller and bookbinder at 62 George Street and 8 Baker Street, was selling high quality silver medals of Henry V, inscribed with the date of abdication of Charles X, encased in presentation boxes of Morocco leather and velvet for the sum of ten shillings, and doing so with 'official' backing. Hortense reassured the duchess that she, at least, was not up to anything.

An exception to this cautiousness came on 6 June when Colonel Charles Fabvier came to London with his Spanish wife of two weeks, Maria de las Nieves. She had previously been married to Marshal Duroc, lord high steward of the empire and Napoleon's most trusted adviser, who had been killed in action. Fabvier himself had been a lieutenant of artillery under General de Marmont and had organized resistance groups to the Allies after Waterloo. During the Restoration, he had opposed the Bourbons and had gone into voluntary exile, in London and Spain in 1822, after opposing the execution of those who had taken part in the carbonarist conspiracy of the 45th line infantry regiment at La Rochelle, in which he had probably taken part.

Hortense and Maria de las Nieves had been friends since girlhood, and this was a visit she confessed touched her deeply. It was with these two friends that Hortense and Louis Napoleon toured London, visiting the elegant part of Georgian Richmond overlooking the winding Thames, which magnificent view Turner had painted and Louis Philippe enjoyed, and also Woolwich Arsenal. They tried to visit Hampton Court Palace, vacant since the days of George III, but were unable to enter it as they could not find anybody to let them in. Before Queen Victoria opened up the state apartments in 1838, viewing was by strict appointment, but nobody in Hortense's party had known this. Instead, they had to content themselves with walking through the extensive grounds and examining the very shabby great maze.

Hortense remembered that she saw 'quelques curiosités' in London, one of which was the maze and another 'le Tunnel'.[14]

London in 1831 was perhaps the most organic of all cities, a complex combination of thuggery and politeness, the mutually parasitic juxtaposition of wealth and poverty with the immense kinetic human energy resulting from the friction between progressive growth and popular inertia. London was also the city most ingeniously reflecting the revolution in science, technology, and industry then underway throughout much of Europe, visible everywhere but nowhere more extravagantly and with more conceit than in the East End where the Thames Tunnel was being forged between Rotherhithe and Wapping Town. This marvel of the day was the pioneering engineering feat of the Legitimist exile Marc Brunel, ably assisted by his young son Isambard.

Visitors came in hundreds daily to look at the 1,300-foot-long construction, fourteen feet between each of the arched supports separating the carriageway from the footpath and buried fifteen feet beneath the bed of the river. Half came with joyful anticipation at the glory shed on England through its French genius; the other half with obvious *schadenfreude* at the inevitable accidents and setbacks they saw as inseparable from such acts of human presumption. However, work on the tunnel had been suspended in 1828 due to mismanagement and lack of investment and would not be resumed until 1835. In 1831, the construction site was open for viewing, but not for crossing the river.

At some point between Wednesday 7 and Monday 13 June – the day before the Fabviers left for France – Hortense and her party visited the tunnel. Claims were subsequently made that either Marc or Isambard Kingdom Brunel – who had taken over the running of the work from his father – personally conducted them around the site; but this was not so. Isambard Brunel had been in London since 27 May, but he left for Bristol on Saturday 10 June without going to the tunnel, and he did not return to London until Saturday 25. Marc brunel was in London, but he also did not visit the tunnel, spending this period working every day at his desk on the continuing problems of the Clifton suspension bridge.[15] In fact, once the Brunels are understood, it is not credible that either of them would have made the special effort to do anything for the Bonapartes. In what would otherwise have been the most high profile event of the visit, a Legitimist engineer would have conducted a Bonapartist ex-queen and a Republican pretender around his greatest achievement. The French language is all that the two groups would have had in common.[16]

At no time in the 1830s did Louis Philippe's position seem more precarious than in the two years following the July Revolution. This was felt by every exile, but Colonel Fabvier wisely advised Louis Napoleon not to get involved in any attempts – whether of his own making or not – to dislodge Louis Philippe at this time. He told Louis Napoleon that this might only compromise him in the future when the occasion might be better suited to it. Louis Philippe had appointed Fabvier commandant of Paris on 4 August 1830, and he certainly knew the situation in the capital better than Louis Napoleon. Maria de las Nieves Fabvier, equally convinced of the July Monarchy's imminent collapse, suggested they wait patiently until it did, then take immediate control. In retrospect this appears to have been a position of absurd naivety, but at the time confused events in Paris would certainly have suggested otherwise. Louis Napoleon took the advice on board, and in spite of much propaganda to the contrary, both at the time and subsequently, he made no attempts to actively interfere in French politics in 1831.

At the beginning of July, 'Comtesse' Lennox suddenly appeared at St George's Street. She explained that her husband had been arrested along with Mirandoli and others, and that letters implicating Louis Napoleon in Lennox's scheme had been found among her papers while she had been detained at the Prefecture of Police. Louis Napoleon knew that this was hardly incriminating since he had rejected any involvement, but Hortense was embarrassed because she still entertained the illusion of financial restitution for the Bonapartes and even a repeal of the Bourbon Law of Proscription. The case had been largely trumped up and deliberately made to look like a Bonapartist uprising – Mirandoli alone was eventually tried and acquitted – but the smear against the Bonapartes remained.

If Louis Napoleon's contact with Continental politics during his first visit was slight, that with English politics was even less impressive. During the closing phase of the elections he had asked whether he could see the State Opening of Parliament from

the viewers' gallery at the medieval Palace of Westminster. Henry Fox was happy to oblige, and on 7 July they went; but they were late in arriving and managed to hear just the end of William IV's speech.

A more mundane and perhaps instructive introduction to English politics followed soon afterwards. In the opinion of many Radicals and others, the Reform Act was not going nearly far enough in the direction of universal (male) suffrage. It had been severely emasculated in order to improve its chances of becoming law, and was being led by a Whig who was, for them, far too rooted in the eighteenth century for their progressive tastes – Grey's Cabinet was in fact the most aristocratic of the century, with all but three members peers of the realm, one an heir to an earldom, one a baronet, and one soon to be elevated to a barony. As Fox and Louis Napoleon left the House of Commons they found themselves faced by a large and agitated demonstration that jostled and insulted them as they made their way with some difficulty to their carriage.

The essentially mild attack was probably indiscriminate, and it is not likely that either the scion of the most liberal family in England or the nephew of the posthumously reinvented Revolutionary Republican idol had been recognized; if they had, all the demonstrators present would almost certainly have parted to let them through. By this time, Louis Napoleon was becoming increasingly popular among ordinary English people. It was reported that many of them offered the Bonapartes their services free of charge, insofar as the Legend had proclaimed Napoleon inseparable from the aspirations of every free, working man. But this was not always the case. Once, when Louis Napoleon entered a tavern on one of his walks and attempted to buy a jug of ale with a gold coin, he was verbally insulted and jostled, although it is not clear whether this potentially serious incident was inspired by his person or by the fact that he had a gold coin.

By the beginning of July, Hortense began to feel the full effect of her extraordinary deprivations of the previous years. Feeling worn out and weak, the day after the celebration party at Holland House she terminated the lease on her house and took her party to Tunbridge Wells so that she could benefit from the famous chalybeate spring. They arrived on Monday 11 and lodged for a week at the Royal Kentish Hotel. This was not the finest hotel in town but the first they would have come across on the London Road after their seven-hour journey. Nevertheless, it was an imposing two-storey Regency remodelling of the much earlier Angel Inn, and they occupied a suite on the upper storey.

On the following Sunday they moved out and rented an obscure little cottage near the centre of the town. Louisa Tighe was there, and when she heard of Hortense's presence this most genial and influential woman immediately befriended the Bonapartes and introduced them to her circle of friends. She had been born the fifth daughter of the duke of Richmond and Lennox, a general and veteran of Waterloo who had thrown the famous ball in Brussels on the eve of Quatre Bras. She was therefore a younger sister of the duchess of Bedford and was related to both the Foxes and Napiers – all descendants of the celebrated eighteenth-century liberal Lennox sisters. In 1825, she had married William Tighe, Whig member for Woodstock and a privy councillor in Ireland.

French was, of course, still both the language of diplomacy and that of polite society, and both Hortense and Louis Napoleon were thrilled to meet so many intelligent young people at Tighe's salons who could converse about Shakespeare in their own language. Hortense noted, with rather too much *amour-propre*: 'I saw myself surrounded by these young English girls on the threshold of their lives …

filled with talents, with learning, speaking perfect French. I was a talking-point, a centre of interest, for them in that isolated place, at the time when London was the centre of pleasure, and they were a friendly distraction for me'.[17]

It was through one of Tighe's salons that Louis Napoleon met Sarah Godfrey, an English girl of modest birth who had been raised in Ireland, with whom he passed the rest of his stay in Tunbridge Wells in a state of what appeared to be confused romantic attachment. He paid her much attention, and the two often took coach rides in the evening moonlight, stopping at romantic locations on the leafy edge of town where Louis Napoleon would refer to her as 'Malvina', the eponymous heroine in a popular novel (1801) by 'Sophie' Cottin.

Even here there was a Napoleonic connection. Although the novel told the story of a middle-aged man whose doomed love for a young girl leads the lovers to form a suicide pact, Cottin based Malvina on the character developed by James Macpherson in his two Ossian (Oisin) epic poems in which Malvina appeared as the bride of Oscar (Osgar), the son of Ossian. Louis Napoleon would have known that 'Ossian' had been his uncle's favourite author, and Napoleon even claimed to have made him the fashion in Europe, although Goethe had done this more than two decades earlier in *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, which quoted from 'Ossian' at length. Napoleon read 'Ossian' because of Macpherson's battles; Louis Napoleon read *Malvina* to Sarah Godfrey because it was an association, however remote, with Napoleon.

But Louis Napoleon knew, and explained, that a nephew of Napoleon could never hope to marry an English girl, although it is more likely that he was already realizing that he could not become properly emotionally attached to women of conventional sexual mores. The timing was in any event poor, for not even a Malvina could be allowed to interfere with the Grand Napoleonic Design, even though Louis Napoleon did not have the slightest idea what it was at the time. Had he married a provincial English girl in 1831 and remained in England, however, it would almost certainly never have happened.

* * *

The principal international political issue of this period for France and England concerned Belgium, an event that provided Bonapartists with the closest defeat they were to enjoy between the First and Second Empires, causing considerable problems for Hortense and Louis Napoleon in London.

The union of the northern Dutch provinces and the southern Austrian territories to form part of the kingdom of the Netherlands under Willem I of Orange had been largely due to English pressure at the Congress of Vienna. It had been a reasonable solution to a vexed problem in 1815, but like all such artificial stews prepared by legislators it was bound to become sour sooner or later. In August 1830, the people of Brussels rose up against their Dutch masters, petitioned for administrative autonomy, and were speedily crushed by their overlords – an unwise and short-sighted response that led to a general insurrection throughout Belgium.

The problem for Europe was simple in outline but exceedingly complex in detail: bring about a peace settlement that would give Belgium a measure of independence and find a head of state for the new country. If nothing was done it was clear that a general European war might ensue between France – which naturally supported Francophile Belgium – and Prussia, Austria and the Germanic states which supported Holland, risking Castlereagh's 'balance of power' and the peace established in 1815. Neither England nor France wished for war, and an agreement between Louis

Philippe and the Foreign Office ensured France's adherence to a policy of non-intervention.

This loose and indefinable diplomatic principle, traceable to William III's foreign policy after 1688, was reintroduced into England by Molé respecting Belgium. Palmerston thereafter turned it into a general policy, much to the chagrin of Metternich who looked forward to another universal crusade against France. Molé had originally been earmarked as ambassador to the Court of St James, but pressure from London had ensured that the crucial posting had gone to Talleyrand. But Molé did not like or trust Talleyrand, and the duke of Wellington, then a reluctant prime minister, forced Louis Philippe to withdraw him as minister of foreign affairs. Molé was replaced by Horace Sébastiani, a Napoleonic hero created Comte de la Porta by Napoleon in 1809, and who was the elder brother of the hero of Dresden. However, Sébastiani had not supported Napoleon during the Hundred Days and had rallied to the Bourbons before abandoning them and participating in the July Revolution. In 1831, his foreign policies were in accord with those of Palmerston and Louis Philippe, and for the time being the *entente cordiale* was maintained while the liberal bankers and moderate politicians supporting Louis Philippe were content.

The pro-Dutch Powers then agreed to abide by any decision reached between England and France, and the Five Powers met in London in November for a conference – called by the king of the Netherlands and organized by Palmerston – resulting in protocols issued on 20 and 27 January establishing the new Belgium under guarantees of perpetual neutrality. But, even supposing the Dutch themselves would accept the terms establishing Belgium, which to begin with they did, whom should they choose to rule it? A small but strong Belgian group rallying around merchants in the principal commercial towns supported the king's son Prince Willem, as they feared the loss of trade under a separate state. Palmerston strongly opposed his candidacy on the grounds of incompetence, and the fact that the official voice of the Belgians and French had made it clear that they would reject any member of the House of Orange. Palmerston nevertheless agreed to a secret proposal to elect him provided Prince Willem could obtain his father's permission, gain the right to bring Luxembourg into Belgium, and generally make a good case for himself to the sympathetic Conference.

But King Willem refused to let go of Luxembourg or to allow his son to rule except as his lieutenant, and the Belgians then proposed their own extraordinary candidate, Hortense's nephew, Karl de Beauharnais, duke of Leuchtenberg. This name, however, was anathema to Louis Philippe, who objected to it in the strongest terms:

> [he is] much agitated by the apprehension of the consequences which might follow the elevation of that individual to the Throne of Belgium. He said it was a scheme originating in France with that Party which wished to involve all Europe in war, and he, therefore, trusted that he should receive the warm support of His Majesty's Government in defeating a project so dangerous to the general tranquillity of the world. He observed that by existing treaties none of the Buonaparte Family were permitted to go to Belgium … I suggested the name of Prince Maximilian of Bavaria … he replied that he [Maximilian] had quarrelled with his own family, that he was of bad character, that he was connected with a very low woman, and was besides particularly inimical to France, but upon my observing that such a choice was preferable to that of a member of the Buonaparte Family, His majesty assented to my observation.[18]

The problem was that none of the candidates proposed by Louis Philippe was acceptable to Britain. At some point he proposed – or had proposed on his behalf – a member of his own extended family, the prince of Capua, son of Queen Amélie's brother Francesco of the restored Bourbons of the Two Sicilies by his second

marriage to Isabel of Spain, daughter of Carlos IV. It seems the idea was to marry the prince to Louis Philippe's eldest daughter Louise, but Palmerston, who had succeeded Lord Aberdeen as foreign secretary shortly after the crisis began, was indignant:

> The Prince de Talleyrand neither avowed nor denied this intention … but His Majesty's Government would be at a loss to understand how an arrangement which should place on the throne of Belgium a nephew of the King of the French, drawing still closer the bonds of such a connexion by a marriage with one of his daughters, could he [be] reconciled with a faithful performance of that engagement.[19]

The quasi-nepotistic designs of Louis Philippe were speedily quashed by the Congress, which then had one option left: to elect, reluctantly, the duke of Leuchtenberg. But the French Government made it very clear that in such a case they would not recognize him and be obliged to renege on their word and invade and annexe Belgium. Britain also objected to Leuchtenberg. Palmerston's objections were not personal, he simply wished to prevent that dissolution of the *entente cordiale* that would have followed the duke's election to Belgium. The other Powers supported the ducal candidate, and most probably Austria's support was intended to lead France into just such a rash act.

However, they had already agreed not to interfere with the decisions of the two principal nations involved, and on 3 February 1831 the Congress itself suggested, as a desperate compromise, Louis Philippe's second son the Duc de Nemours. This time both Palmerston and Louis Philippe strongly objected, and Palmerston put his case in colourful terms to his ambassador in Paris: 'If the choice falls upon Nemours, and if the King of the French accepts, it will be proof that the policy of France is like an infection clinging to the walls of the dwelling, and breaking out in every successive occupant who comes within their influence'.[20]

Nevertheless, the Duc de Nemours was voted king of the Belgians by the Conference with a majority of one vote over Leuchtenberg and Franz Karl of Austria, younger son of Franz I, whose name had also been put forward. It was a personal disaster for Palmerston, who believed that 'the acceptance of the Crown for Nemours would produce a general war in Europe'.[21] On 1 February, Palmerston assumed the full authority of his position as co-ordinator and arranged for the Conference to dissolve the Crown of Belgium. This move was supported by Grey's Cabinet the following day, and it was unopposed by Talleyrand although he withheld his signature. Happily, however, Louis Philippe did not accept for his son the fate he had been only too willing to allow to fall to his nephew-in-law. His main concern had been to defeat Leuchtenberg, and, this having been achieved, on 4 February he officially withdrew his son from the process. Fine questions as to the legality of Palmerston's move to quash the vote of the Conference were now academic.

The exasperated Congress was now in a difficult position, since the question of territorial secession had been effectively engineered – although not yet ratified – but still no universally acceptable head of state had been found. A regency by a provisional government in the name of the Five Powers followed as the only temporary solution, and this was accompanied by a period of anarchy. In April, the Congress proposed another candidate, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha – fourth child of the duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfield – who had narrowly escaped being sent as king to Greece and who had been one of the original unofficial candidates favoured by Palmerston and Grey. He was also acceptable to Belgium, where he had once been suggested. But the British Government knew that because of his connections with the House of Hanover – he was brother to Princess Victoire and therefore uncle to Princess Victoria, as well as having been married to Princess Charlotte, daughter and

sole child of the future George IV – he would not be a popular choice in France ‘where he would be considered … an English Viceroy’.[22]

Louis Philippe stalled; but so too did the Belgians in order to obtain more territorial concessions. An exhausted Palmerston was ready to accept even a republic in Belgium if a suitable choice could not be found, but the long-suffering Congress was adamant that the protocol of January should remain, giving Belgium until 1 June to accept the idea of Leopold, as an ultimatum. In March, Périer replaced Laffitte and the *Résistance* ministry pursued the same policy of peace as its predecessor but with firmness that eliminated unhelpful propaganda against Leopold. Sébastiani dropped his opposition and Belgium too relented. On 4 June, the Belgian Assembly voted for Leopold by 155 votes to 44, and on Saturday 25 their delegates arrived in London and accepted, with reservation, the agreement of Eighteen Articles rearranging the economic and physical territory available to the new kingdom. By the end of the following day the legalities of the separation were completed in Brussels, and on July 21 Leopold, accepting the Crown, arrived to take his oath of allegiance to the new constitution. Shortly after this, the Dutch under the Prince of Orange in any case invaded and easily defeated the still unorganized Belgian army. Louis Philippe interceded at Leopold’s request and French forces drove King Willem’s army back into Holland. The treaty of separation was formally signed in London between the Five Powers and Belgium on 15 November 1831, and the new kingdom was born.

The problem for Louis Napoleon was that certain people were unable to accept that he was not behind some attempt to acquire the throne of Belgium for himself, while others who did not believe it were nevertheless determined that it should appear that way. These rumours had begun to spread even before his arrival in England, but by June it was being suggested in the French Press that he had been behind the proposal to elect the duke of Leuchtenberg. Hortense considered all such suggestions as being ‘so ridiculous’ that she could only ‘smile at such an absurdity’.[23] Louis Napoleon sent a solid denial to the Press:

> It is said that the Queen of Holland is looking for an opportunity to offer her son to the Belgians … from this it appears that my mother’s presence in England is attributed to political views, but she is there only because she did not wish to be separated from her only remaining son. Having joined the partisans in the sacred cause of Italian independence I have been compelled to take refuge in England … I should long ago have appeared as a volunteer in the glorious ranks of the Belgians, or in those of the immortal Poles, had I not been apprehensive that my actions would have been imputed to views of personal interest …[24]

However, it was certainly true that various political groups within France and Belgium had supported Hortense’s nephew. Had he been elected, aside from a probable European war, the result for Louis Napoleon would have been interesting if not exactly fulfilling. Certainly Lord Granville in Paris thought so: ‘Those who advocated his cause, both in Belgium and in France, intended by making him a rallying point to the Bonaparte faction to carry into effect their scheme of restoring the Grand Empire’.[25]

In their different ways both Granville and Hortense were right. The Napoleonists who looked forward to Leuchtenberg’s election doubtless saw it as a stepping stone to refounding the ‘Grand Empire’. However, it would certainly not have had Louis Napoleon at its head but the Duc de Reichstadt. It is difficult to see what future Louis Napoleon might have had in a Beauharnais Belgium apart from a position in the army. The truth is that Louis Napoleon played no part whatsoever in the Belgian Question, and the British Government had the good sense to believe it. Because of his

subsequent career it is an easy mistake to retrospectively endow Louis Napoleon with influence he simply did not possess in 1831, and the political flak in that year was taken by Hortense.

Before Prince Leopold left England he met Hortense privately in London on June 15 to discuss her return passage through his new kingdom. Hortense was acquainted with Leopold since 1807 when he and his elder brother, Ernst, had gone to Paris to petition Napoleon for the enlargement of the duchy of Coburg. Leopold even joked about the whole issue, saying 'You won't take my kingdom away from me while passing through, will you?'[26] He was not speaking to Louis Napoleon when he said this but to Hortense alone, as though in the manner of a Renaissance virago she might sweep him off his throne and only on account of Salic law thrust her son on it in her place. However, it was only a slice of barbed humour, because they agreed that on her return to Arenenberg Hortense would not travel through Belgium at all.

Five days after this meeting, Talleyrand was at last instructed by Sébastiani to issue Hortense with a passport, authorized to the Comtesse d'Arenenberg and suite. They were permitted to return to Switzerland through France, but not through Paris; nor were they allowed to leave England before the anniversary of the July Revolution. Alphonse de Lamartine, then also on his first English visit and still in his bitter anti-Bonapartist phase, had just had a cordial interview with Talleyrand who then manipulated the situation to the satisfaction of Louis Philippe. The king had not, it is true, been much worried at the Bonaparte presence in Paris during *le cinq mai,* but he was not taking any chances with *le juliol*. A polite exchange of letters with Talleyrand – who continued to refuse to see the Bonapartes in person – informed Hortense that her passport was finally ready, and on 30 July the party was able to leave Tunbridge Wells and return to London.

Hortense was delighted, not least because once again Louis Napoleon had become agitated over a reference to him in the French press. Just before they left, an article in *Le Précurseur*, a minor but influential moderate Royalist paper published in Lyon, had implied that Bonapartism was dead and that only a Third [Bourbon] Restoration could 'save' France. This inspired him to write the first of his many political pamphlets as a riposte, but although he appears to have tried to get it published under the auspices of Holland House nothing became of the project. The relief Hortense felt can be imagined, but the ride into London heard no subject discussed other than the perfidy of the July Monarchy and the deceptions of the Bourbons. They reached London on 1 August – the day Hortense's passport arrived – and returned to St George's Street. Finding that the landlord had moved back in, they were at first worried that they might have to look for yet another house to rent before they were ready to leave England, but he generously allowed the party to lodge with him until their departure.

The final week in London saw just one social engagement, at the influential London home of Lady Tankerville, who as Corisande de Gramont, daughter of the Duc de Guiche, had married the earl of Tankerville in 1806. In 1815, Lord Tankerville had been Tory member for Walton as Baron Ossulston, but he had been one of many to attempt to do something for Napoleon through his position as a Member of Parliament. Lady Tankerville's sister, Aglae de Gramont, had married as her second husband Comte Sébastiani, and Lady Tankerville was also close to Holland House, often entertaining Lord Holland at her home. Louis Napoleon might have reflected on how wide the Napoleonic net had been cast since Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.

On Sunday 7 August, Hortense, Louis Napoleon, Thélin, and Masuyer took a steamship back to Calais from Dover. The crossing this time was smooth. Hortense spent most of it talking to Sir Robert Adair, the veteran diplomat and friend of Charles James Fox who had travelled to France after 1789 to study the Revolution; he was on his way to Belgium to make final arrangements following Leopold's enthronement.

Hortense made two interesting comments on the visit. She noted perceptively that: 'There I saw that this liberty for which one longs so ardently today is not just an empty word';[27] the three-month stay with its absence of policing after years of Continental misrule must have made London seem like a release from prison. Then she made the curious and less perceptive, but personally revealing, remark that:

> Of all the things I saw in England that which made the deepest impression on me was the extent of the affluence. One might have asked, where are the poor? They are there, one replies, many of them; but the outward appearance of each one, like the care taken with all the buildings, belies this fact.[28]

Hortense discussed these and other thoughts with Louis Napoleon, and when he read the manuscript of the visit Hortense was preparing it helped consolidate the attack on his besieged Anglophobia.[29] Although Louis Napoleon as a young and uninhibited man saw more of the real England than Hortense as a middle-aged woman, her judgement was often considerably shrewder than his. Bulwer-Lytton's remark concerning the complete absence of Francophobia in England was obviously an affectation for Talleyrand's benefit, but it is clear that by and large both he and Hortense's 'simple artisan' were on the whole probably right. Almost a generation separated the men and women of 1831 from those who cheered Wellington after Waterloo. One thing was for certain: as far as Louis Napoleon was concerned, nobody would hear of *Albion perfide* from him again.

NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter Two

[1] *Hortense I* iii 309. As on two subsequent occasions, Louis Napoleon evaded the formalities associated with entry into England, made more regrettable because copies of the Alien Certificates of Entry (kept between the years 1826 and 1849) have not survived before 1836. The relevant Index is extant [PRO HO 5/26], and although this would have dated the arrival, named the ship, and confirmed the ports of arrival and departure, no link can be established between any entry and either Hortense or Louis Napoleon.
[2] *Ilchester I* 119, Henry Richard Fox to Caroline Fox 12 Oct. 1792.
[3] *Holland* 183. It is difficult to determine the precise nature of Louis Napoleon's illness. Hortense described the affliction in Italy as 'measles' [*Hortense I* iii 243/265], while Dr Balancier diagnosed 'severe inflammation', [ibid. 291/297]. On arriving in London, Hortense declared that 'une jaunisse des plus fortes se déclara' [ibid. 310], while thirty years later Louis Napoleon dismissed his illness with typical taciturnity, stating that he had suffered from a 'sore throat' [*Wellesley* 217]. Measles is uncommon in adults but will in any case run its course within a week unless accompanied by often fatal complications such as encephalitis or bronchopneumonia; survivors will often carry the scars for life. Louis Napoleon's catarrhal symptoms were described, but the typical eruption of the skin and mucous membranes (Koplik's Spots) were not in evidence.

There are more than twenty forms of jaundice, symptomatic of either a benign disease such as a gallstone blocking the common bile duct, or a malignant carcinoma of the head of the pancreas. The external symptoms are again unmistakable, and also were not noted. Neither condition ought to have been mistaken by Holland for 'gastric fever'. In 1861, after Prince Albert's death, Lord Clarendon regarded Holland – physician to Victoria and Albert – as 'scarcely fit to attend a sick cat' [*Wellesley* 229].
[4] *Hortense I* iii 311.
[5] Ibid. loc.cit..
[6] *Bulwer-Lytton* i 4, 38.
[7] *Napier* 177.
[8] *The Times* Monday 20 Jun. 1831.
[9] *Hortense I* iii 322.
[10] *Ridley: N&E* 82.
[11] *Hortense I* iii 322-3.
[12] Ibid. 316. Or, as the official account put it: 'Toute le haute aristocratie de Londres avait à coeur de recevoir la Duchesse avec marques d'affection et d'estime. Chacun semblait désireux de montrer à la belle-fille de Napoléon que les Anglais regrettaient leur sévérité inutile envers l'Empereur … Hortense n'accepte aucune des invitations qu'ell reçut. Elle semblait fuir le bruit et le monde' [*Hortense II* 442].
[13] Also on 16 May a rival production opened at Astley's Amphitheatre, a five-act medley called *The Life and Death of Napoleon Buonaparte*. Astley's was known for its Napoleonic productions featuring equestrian showmanship (*The Battle of Waterloo* and *The Burning of Moscow*) under their principal actor Alexander 'Napoleon' Gomersal, who always played the part of Napoleon and even looked like him, whereas Warde did not. However, *The Times* compared Astley's efforts unfavourably with the 'more elaborate' production at Covent Garden, but stating that 'in any other part no one would think of comparing his [Gomersal's] acting with that of Mr Warde', as Napoleon he was 'a formidable competitor'.
[14] *Hortense I* iii 318.
[15] *Brunel Mss* (U.B.) i ff.122-4, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's private journal kept from 1830 to 1834; (I.C.E.) 60 No. 14 [1831], Marc Brunel's private journal kept from 1821 to 1841.
[16] The confusion is due to the fact that in 1827 Charles Lucien Bonaparte visited the tunnel when it was under construction and he was part of a group. It almost cost Isambard Brunel his life, as the geologist Roderick Murchison explained: 'We went … with young Brunel, into a punt, which he was to steer into the tunnel till we reached the repairing shield. About eleven feet of water were still in the tunnel, leaving just space enough above our heads for Brunel to stand up and claw the ceiling and sides to impel us. "Now, gentlemen, if by accident there should be a rush of water, I shall turn the punt over and prevent you being jammed against the roof, and we shall then be carried out and up the shaft!" On this C. Bonaparte remarked, "But I cannot swim!" and just as he said the words, Brunel, swinging carelessly from right to left, fell overboard, and out went the candles with which he was lighting up the place. Taking this for the *sauve qui peut*, fat C.B., then the very image of Napoleon … was about to roll after him, when I held him fast, and, by the glimmering light from the entrance, we found young Brunel, who swam like a fish, coming up on the other side of the punt, and soon got him on board ...' [*Geikie* i 136-37]

[17] *Hortense I* iii 326
[18] PRO FO 27/426 (32), Granville to Palmerston 21 Jan. 1831
[19] PRO FO 27/424 (29), Palmerston to Granville [?] Feb. 1831
[20] *Woodward* 228
[21] *Webster* i 130
[22] PRO FO 27/428 (169), Granville to Palmerston 1 Apr. 1831
[23] *Hortense I* iii 312-13
[24] *The Times* Thursday 23 Jun. 1831
[25] PRO FO 27/426 (37), Granville to Palmerston 24 Jan. 1831
[26] *Hortense I* iii 319
[27] Ibid. 310
[28] Ibid. 323
[29] Hortense's memoirs were completed in Augsberg in 1820 and were originally intended to go no further. But the events of 1831 turned out to be so colourful that when she returned to Arenenberg she wrote an account of this single year, completing it on 28 December 1832. It alone was published in 1834 under the title *La Reine Hortense en Italie, en France, et en Angleterre pendant l'année 1831*. The complete memoirs could not be published until the death of Empress Eugénie in 1920. They were then edited by Prince Napoléon Bonaparte, head of the house as Napoléon V, and published in 1927 with the 1831 account forming the second half of the third volume. However, when the English translation was issued the following year, in two volumes, the 1831 account was not included and it remains untranslated.