

Chapter Three

1832-1833: The Second Visit

NAPOLEON'S only legitimate son, by Marie Louise of Austria, was given the title King of Rome at his birth – the title traditionally held by Holy Roman Emperors when in the position of Crown Princes. Some had called him *Fils de l'Homme*, others *L'Aiglon*, and he was always going to be – then briefly was – Napoleon II. In 1808, Napoleon annexed the duchies of Parma and Piacenza after the death of Duke Ferdinand, and at the Congress of Vienna they were, along with the duchy of Guastalla, given over to Marie Louise.

However, in 1817 a supplementary article to the Treaty of Paris fixed the restoration of these duchies to the Bourbon Carlo, duca di Lucca, grandson of Ferdinand, on the eventual death of Marie Louise, with a special clause excluding her son from the succession. By this time he had been given over to his grandfather in Vienna, and in 1818 Franz bestowed on him the Austrian title of Duc de Reichstadt. The Allies allowed him to remain in Austria on condition that he should be tutored in Vienna and raised with his Napoleonic heritage erased, a task entrusted to the willing Metternich. Few believed that such a task could succeed, and by 1830 hopes were raised higher than ever that the young Bonaparte once proclaimed Napoleon II would emerge as such, but his confused aspirations were constantly dashed by Metternich. In February 1832, following a series of pointless military exercises designed to keep him busy, he contracted pulmonary tuberculosis, and in the early morning of 22 July he died at Schönbrunn palace. Poets and Napoleonists wept again, and the defunct empire now had no direct heir.

Up until 1831, Joseph Bonaparte had been content to live the life of a country gentleman at his estate, Point Breeze, in Bordentown on the Delaware in New Jersey, where he had been since his escape from France in 1815, having put a happy distance between himself and *La Famille*. But the coming of age of the Duc de Reichstadt in 1832 would have been a major event, which Joseph had no intention of missing. He left his estate in the summer of 1831 and sailed to England from Philadelphia on the packet-ship *Alexander*, arriving in Liverpool on 16 August where he lodged at the King's Arms inn.

The press was able to report that something of a crowd had formed in front of the building as everybody tried to catch a glimpse of 'the ex-King'.¹ But Joseph gave little time for them to establish him as a substitute Napoleon on board the *Bellerophon* when thousands of spectators and well-wishers had turned out to see the 'Disturber of the World' in Torbay. Four days later he arrived in London, lodging at 23 Park Crescent, one of the imposing mansions cupping the south side of Regent's Park. Here, while he waited for an opportunity to travel to Vienna, if permitted, he learned of the serious nature of the Duc de Reichstadt's illness and later his death. Joseph Bonaparte, as eldest brother, therefore unexpectedly found himself titular head of *La Famille* according to orthodox devolvement of a hereditary title.

It was at this time that Louis Napoleon expressed his dissent from the orthodoxy that had placed his eldest uncle in this position. In Zürich, in May 1832, he published his first tract, the fifteen-page *Réveries politiques* in which he outlined his conception of a republic with a constitutionally-regulated monarchical government under (by implication) Napoleon II as the best defence against both the Terror on the one hand and the abuse of personal power on the other. But he also made a clear reference to a

plebiscite for the choosing of the Napoleonic heir in the event of the death or 'unsuitability' of the nearest relative. When Louis Napoleon published this work the Duc de Reichstadt was of course still alive, and even the extent of his illness was unknown to him.

Years earlier, when Louis Napoleon still had an older brother, he had once remarked to his childhood companion Hortense Cornu, the daughter of his mother's maid-servant, 'What a blessing that I have two before me in succession ... so that I can be happy in my own way, instead of being, as the head of my house must be, the slave of a mission'.² But, after the pathetic death in Vienna, Masuyer noted a striking change in Louis Napoleon's sartorial habits:

Dressed in black, and wearing in his cravat a little eagle in diamonds, with a thunderbolt of rubies in its claws, he appeared to me as the man of destiny, although, with his serious features that light up with a singularly attractive smile, he is above all the man of mystery.³

The death of the Duc de Reichstadt changed everything. Joseph Bonaparte wrote to his three brothers and Louis Napoleon summoning them to London for a conference to determine the future course of the Bonaparte dynasty. Jérôme came at once; Lucien procrastinated and eventually arrived too late; while Louis, a lifelong hypochondriac who also happened to be severely ill most of the time, was indisposed at the Villa Davost in Florence and did not come at all.

Louis Napoleon left Switzerland in the company of a new friend, Francesco Arese, a Milanese nobleman who had been a *carbonaro* and was also on the run. In November they found themselves passing through Belgium, a country still technically prohibited to Louis Napoleon. On Wednesday 14 November he wrote to his mother a melancholy letter employing a striking parallel, in sentiment, to a famous stanza from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: 'yesterday we visited the field of the battle of Waterloo. You can understand all I felt in seeing the spot where the fate of France was decided, and where the star of the Emperor set forever'.⁴ Five days later, in the afternoon of Monday 19, he arrived at Dover as the Comte d'Arenenberg, with Arese disguised as his manservant.⁵ They travelled directly to London and joined Joseph in Park Crescent, where they remained until the meeting was concluded.

It was a pathetic council for the heirs of the great empire. Jérôme advised the need to avoid doing anything that might embarrass *La Famille* and Joseph advised the need to avoid doing anything at all. Both men were in opposition to Louis Napoleon, eager for action and now determined to align republican and Bonapartist elements against the July Monarchy according to the system laid down in his recent publication. But the timid intransigence of middle age was victorious: 'For the last fifteen years the only motive force behind the actions of my entire family has been the fear of compromising themselves',⁶ he wrote to his mother in Arenenberg.

Louis Napoleon had excellent cause to be frustrated: having become the principal embodiment of the Napoleonic heritage was, by 1832, hardly a delusion on his part. The most significant symbolic gesture he had recently experienced was to have received from the dying Duc de Reichstadt his last testament, including the gift of one of Napoleon's weapons, the celebrated sword Napoleon had used at Austerlitz. But of course Metternich had seen to it that the Duc de Reichstadt had never physically possessed any Napoleonic memorabilia, and the transfer of ownership to Louis Napoleon was therefore *de jure* rather than *de facto*. He would in fact never see this sword, which would later be interred with Napoleon at Les Invalides. Nevertheless, this symbolic gesture was more important than the gift itself, and the fact that he

alone of the second Bonaparte generation had been invited to London by Joseph was no more than the acknowledgement of this investiture from beyond the tomb.

There was more to this than pose alone. At Arenenberg, in August 1831, Louis Napoleon had been asked by two Polish officers to lend his name officially to the revolutionary movement in Poland, as he and his brother had done in Italy. But the insurrection against the Autocrat of all the Russias who had effectively annexed Poland – and would soon do so ‘legally’ – was a very different task to freeing both the Papal States of its enervating hierarchy and the northern peninsula from Habsburg rule. Louis Napoleon sensibly declined, considering that it was too soon for him to be anything other than ‘a tranquil spectator’ of European turmoil, as he explained to his father.⁷

During this period Louis Napoleon and Hortense struck up a friendly rivalry with the literary Legitimist flagship and aspiring politician Chateaubriand on the issue of French rule. Chateaubriand’s family had suffered badly under the Terror, and in 1814, having served Napoleon as a minor diplomat, the leading writer of the Romantic school published his first political tract. *De Buonaparte, des Bourbons, et de la nécessité de se rallier à nos princes légitimes* was a self-explanatory work that, according to Louis XVIII, did more for the Bourbon Restoration than 100,000 soldiers. But a year later Chateaubriand was among those who wept at Napoleon’s imprisonment at St Helena.

On 10 April 1832, the July Monarchy finally abrogated Clause 4 of the Bourbon Law of Proscription. But it did so solely in order that the administration could impose one of its own, a broad promulgation in which Article VI proscribed the Bourbons themselves *in combination with* the Bonapartes. As a member of the Chamber of Peers, Chateaubriand vainly spoke out against Article VI and its ridiculous combination, with all it implied for him by associating one family with the other. Before the new law was announced, Louis Napoleon had written to him that ‘to make it [the Bourbon Monarchy] worthy it is not enough that you should declare yourself to be in its favour but rather that it should prove itself worthy of your support’.⁸ He then sent him a copy of his *Rêveries politiques*; Chateaubriand replied that although there could be no king for him other than a descendent of ‘Saint Louis’, if this were not possible ‘then, Prince, there is no name which would better serve the glory of France than yours’.⁹ Legitimists and Napoleonists suddenly had a point in common.

Once again Louis Napoleon happened to be in England at a time when the government of Louis Philippe had to sweat through a series of domestic crises. André Dupin, one of three politically active brothers and an Orleanist deputy, along with the Comte de Montalivet, a peer and member of the Cabinet as minister of public instruction and worship, had helped split the Government after the death of Périer from the European outbreak of cholera morbus in April 1832. In May, Talleyrand was recalled from his post in London and the following month an attempt was made to form a new Cabinet with him in it; the move failed and Talleyrand returned to London. Louis Philippe was forced to resume quasi-personal rule until October 11 when a compromise ministry was formed under Marshal Soult. Meanwhile, Thiers returned from the provinces where he had been busy writing on Napoleonic matters, taking the important post of minister of the interior.

The choleric months of April through to June were particularly difficult for Louis Philippe. A state of siege was declared in Paris on 5 June 1832 during the ‘Lamarque riots’ when Étienne Cabet, the leader of the communistic Icarian sect, and others promoted a republican riot during the funeral of General Lamarque, commander of Napoleon’s army in the Vendée during the Hundred Days. Worse, the Duchesse de

Berry and two Legitimists who had held office during the Restorations, General de Saint-Priest and Marshal Ghaissans de Bourmont, attempted a Bourbon restoration in April. The duchess had left England for Italy shortly after her meeting with Hortense, landing in the Vendée at the head of a small army where Périer, in his last public act, defeated her with a combination of military force and intrigue. In June, the 57-page *De la force en matière de Gouvernement* by François Farcy, co-founder of the *Société libre des Beaux-Arts* and since 1827 editor of the *Journal des Artistes*, was issued 'on the occasion of the events of 5 June', largely in opposition to the July Monarchy.¹⁰

Furthermore, Pierre Berryer, Legitimist deputy for Haute-Loire, and Genoude were arrested in Paris in a spectacularly high-profile move that backfired; the incriminating papers the July Monarchy expected to unearth turned out to be no more than the standard rhetoric expected of any known Legitimist. Laffitte constantly opposed the *Résistance* ministry, while Lafayette had recently publicly declared his disappointment with the *juste-milieu* of his Citizen King, reckoning him to have betrayed the liberal principles he had promised to support in 1830.¹¹ Then, on 1 December 1832, a radical illustrated daily satirical journal made its first appearance on the streets of Paris when the Lyons-born lithographer Charles Philipon founded *Le Charivari* ('rough music'). He had also founded the republican weekly illustrated newspaper *La Caricature* in 1830 in which Honoré Daumier's famous portrayal of the king as a pear was an idea immediately transferred and expanded in *Le Charivari*, the first issue of which mercilessly satirized the political events of the summer.

At the same time *La Légende napoléonienne* was growing. The famous *images* from Épinal in the Vosges flooded Paris with Napoleonic coloured pictures, inexpensive and effective portraits of First Empire Bonapartes covering themselves in *la gloire*. Frédéric Chopin, since September 1831 a self-imposed exile in Paris, had given his immensely successful debut recital on 26 February. On 27 July, as Granville observed in a dispatch, he rode around in the Place du Théâtre-Français in front of the theatre on a white charger, dressed in a long grey overcoat and cocked hat. Everybody roared with approval, while some affected to fall to their knees, shouting 'Vive l'Empereur!' The Franco-Polish pianist-composer, cynical darling of the Parisian *bourgeoisie*, was drawing attention to the plight of Poland as much as criticizing the regime that was doing nothing to help it.

Once again Louis Napoleon 'observed the turmoil' closely from London but without taking any direct action. Now that his health had returned and his mother was absent he spent more time out of doors than behind them. His cousin Charlotte, Joseph's second daughter who had married the late Napoléon Louis, had arrived in London to visit her father. Louis Napoleon enjoyed being able to take her shopping, proudly displaying his knowledge of Regent Street with its little Argyll Rooms theatre, the cigar-end finders, and the regular *Punch and Judy* shows on the corner of New Burlington Street, as well as the fashionable furriers, hatters, and purveyors of exotic foodstuffs, like a seasoned tourist. What they thought of the prostitutes, cadgers, and pickpockets who operated on Nash's great thoroughfare in broad daylight with impunity was another matter. Charlotte had blamed Louis Napoleon for her husband's death, but this common reaction to grief soon passed and they remained close until her own death from a mismanaged delivery.

On 5 February 1833, Louis Napoleon was once again seated in the viewers' gallery in the House of Commons to witness the State Opening of Parliament, this time with Achille Murat, who was still in London, and Arese. Having learned his lesson he arrived early and was able to hear it all. The Whigs under Grey had won a significant victory the previous May on the strength of the Reform Bill. This, in its new form,

was about to be read for the third time in the Lower House (23 March), and for the first time in the Lords on a motion by Grey (27 March). It would be resurrected in its amended form after another setback (7 May) precipitating further national unrest, with William IV reluctantly sanctioning the creation of fifty Whig peers to enable it to pass through successfully, though this turned out to be unnecessary. The *Court Journal* noted that Louis Napoleon observed the proceedings with ‘particular interest’,¹² and the stimulating effect Britain’s parliamentary monarchical system had on this most liberal-minded Bonaparte, particularly at such a crucial and unprecedented time in British political history, may be imagined.

The same source passed a curious comment on Louis Napoleon at one of the very few fashionable parties he attended during the second visit, in the middle of March. It described him as a ‘fine military-looking young man, bearing considerable resemblance to Napoleon, but with less play of countenance’.¹³ Obviously, physiognomic resemblance could not have been intended where there simply was none. But, as early portraits show, beyond the Byronic sentiments the young Louis Napoleon carried the bearing of Napoleon without effort. Deeper analyses were not so heady, however. At this time Henry Fox maintained that Louis Napoleon was ‘a good, but not a wise youth, who has been surrounded from his cradle by intriguers and conspirators’.¹⁴ If Louis Napoleon kept an eye on events in Paris but did nothing it was as much to do with biding his time as with knowing that in reality incompetents and self-serving sycophants surrounded him to a degree Fox could not have imagined. Struggling against this mass of inertia with quiet wisdom was precisely what made Louis Napoleon a ‘wise youth’.

One interesting and perhaps influential journey Louis Napoleon made at this time was undertaken in March to the north of England. As with so many incidents in his life for which there was no supplementary comment, the precise reasons why he chose to do this are uncertain. Perhaps it was simply to satisfy a desire to know more about the industrial heart of the country to which he was becoming increasingly sympathetic. At any rate he visited Birmingham and Manchester, whose agitation during the Reform debates would ensure for themselves the status of parliamentary boroughs with two representative members each, granted after the successful third reading of the Bill in the Lords in June.

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company had opened its thirty-six-mile line on 15 September 1830 – just five years after the first steam passenger train had run between Stockton and Darlington – and began its first regular passenger service on 1 March 1831. The trains were divided into first and second class runs rather than mixed stock, and Louis Napoleon and Arese took a Six Inside coach at five shillings each in one of the four daily first class trains. There were fifteen stations along the route, but the first class trains stopped once only, at Newton Bridge, for oiling and general examination of the engine. The six-carriage train was therefore able to steam along at what to Louis Napoleon seemed the unbelievable speed of twenty-seven miles an hour.

It was, of course, Louis Napoleon’s first railway journey. He described to his mother how the train ‘starts off at an ever-increasing speed, then all objects flash by at an incredible pace; houses, trees, fences, and everything else disappear before you can really see them ... half-way along the track you meet another vehicle which passes quite close to you at the speed of lightning’.¹⁵ When he and Arese reached Wavetree Lane, the Liverpool terminus, they were able to use one of the company’s three omnibuses from the coach office in Dale Street to wherever they wished to go, the fare being included in the five shillings.

Louis Napoleon was extremely impressed. In France, the first steam operated passenger service would run on a short length of track as part of the overall line between St Étienne and Lyons in late 1832. The only other line in France in 1831 – eleven miles between St Étienne and Andrézieux – was horse-drawn. It would be under the Second Empire that the railway industry in France would flourish after years of prejudice and neglect, first by an administration rooted in the age of the horse and carriage then by a Republic at the mercy of popular fears of rural displacement and change.

At the beginning of April, Lucien at last arrived in London from Viterbo in central Italy. The ‘Family Conference’ was over and Joseph had disappeared ‘somewhere in the suburbs, but we do not know where’.¹⁶ Lucien’s delay in responding to Joseph’s call was regrettable in so far as he was, at this time, the only elder Bonaparte willing to stand up for the rights of *La Famille*, although with his pen rather than any of his brother’s swords.¹⁷ Louis Napoleon had by now also acquired a ready aptitude for penmanship, and he spent long hours in his new apartment putting together notes for his next publication, which he would complete on returning to Switzerland.¹⁸ He did not see Joseph again during this visit, and Joseph preferred to use Murat as an intermediary with him since he had literary and political talents close to Louis Napoleon’s own. The two cousins spent a great deal of time together in London; they were firm friends, and would remain so until Murat’s early death in 1847. As far as Joseph was concerned, however, the debate was concluded.

It would be remarkable if Louis Napoleon did not witness the most extraordinary example of the Napoleonic Legend during his second visit. An Italian refugee appositely named Maestro, lodging at 31 Oxenden Street, Haymarket, had spent several years producing four octavo volumes of the life of Napoleon in outline drawings, each page carrying a single image of his life at some stage from childhood to St Helena. The astonishing feat that projected the work into the public domain was that the lines of each drawing – as fine as any etching – were not lines at all but tiny letters describing the scene they depicted. They were so small that they could be read only with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass, which Maestro was good enough to supply. Throughout May the work was displayed at Oxenden Street, and hundreds of visitors shuffled through the room to marvel at the eccentric draughtsmanship through the lens, dropping pennies into a tin. But this excessive gimmickry did not impress everybody:

All that can be said of a performance of this kind is, that it evinces considerable ingenuity and patience on the part of the artist; but we do not think that he has employed his time and talents in the most profitable manner ... we suspect few would prefer perplexing their eyesight by deciphering the minute characters ... to reading the history of Napoleon in four good legible volumes.¹⁹

It would be difficult to see how Louis Napoleon could have resisted the temptation to press his way through the ‘studio’.

It may seem that Louis Napoleon’s second English visit was as much of a failure as the first, since he had failed to represent to his uncles the necessity of Bonaparte cohesion, dynamism, and purpose. But he realized that Napoleon had been right with his often negative assessment of *La Famille*. He had also learned the importance of self-reliance and of nourishing a healthy mistrust of relatives, particularly his uncles whose natural mixture of jealousy, prejudice, and bogus paternalism rarely made them anything other than obstructive.

It was also true that he once again failed to make a deep impression on the English, and again the Government did not accord him official recognition, although he did not

consider himself ready to be treated as a *de facto* pretender to the French seat of government. Louis Philippe's eldest son, the Duc d'Orléans, made an official visit to Britain in the middle of April, a visit notified in advance and granted by William IV in the customary manner, who readily and congenially accepted him.²⁰ On 17 May, the duke reviewed the two regiments of Life Guards, 17th Lancers, the Foot Guards, and a detachment of artillery at Hyde Park – almost four years to the day since the last time he had been invited to do this.²¹ Was it galling for Louis Napoleon to spend six months in England, mostly in London, with barely a mention in the press, while those he believed to be the false organs of the French people were treated with the delicate protocol denied to him? Louis Napoleon realized that he was still regarded in England (when he was being regarded at all) as an uncertain quantity, but a lack of patience would never be one of his faults, however much the king of England may like to lionize his Orleanist rival.

‘At last he is returning to his mother; he will be more sheltered there from the intrigues of the plotters who abound in this immense Babylon’, Joseph wrote to Louis Bonaparte in May; ‘At his age it is indeed difficult not to be duped sometimes’.²² Whatever secret plots Louis Napoleon may or may not have been privy to in London he would never forget Joseph's pusillanimity.

Shortly after Louis Napoleon returned to Arenenberg, Hortense completed her account of the year 1831 and he read the entire manuscript. Her concluding words were much more to his taste than the timid rhetoric of his uncle: ‘As for the people, if they remember their glory, their strength, their nobleness, and the constant solicitude of which they were the object, our return will always be dear to them. I am convinced of it, and this thought is the sweetest consolation that one may cherish in exile, to take with oneself into the grave’.²³

NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter Three

¹ *The Times* Saturday 18 Aug. 1831.

² *Jerrold* i 235. This remark, submitted to the *Cornhill Magazine* in May 1873, contradicted Malmesbury's 1829 recollection of Louis Napoleon having the conviction that he would rule over France. Cornu, who was close to Louis Napoleon, claimed that this occurred when Napoléon Louis died, four years after Malmesbury's impression. But there is no need to suggest either party was mistaken or indulging in retrospective tampering. Louis Napoleon himself probably did not know his own complex aspirations at this time, one day accepting them as valid and the next dismissing them as unwanted obligations.

³ *Guest* 21.

⁴ *Simpson: Rise* 335.

Stop! — for thy tread is on an Empire's dust!
An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchred below!
Is the spot mark'd with no colossal bust?
Nor column trophied for triumphal show? [Canto III: 17]

⁵ PRO HO 5/25 'Arenenberg, The Count & Servt.' certificates 2681 & 2682. Their passports were sent on to Dover on 20 December.

⁶ *Guest* 23.

⁷ *Jerrold* i 209.

⁸ *Ibid.* 435, Louis Napoleon to Chateaubriand 4 May 1832.

⁹ *Thirria* i 234.

¹⁰ Farcy sent a personally inscribed copy to King William IV. The tract, like Farcy himself, was cautiously Napoleonist: 'Hercule et Napoléon seront toujours des dieux pour la foule', and: 'Napoléon eût aussi à lutter contre républicains et les royalists; il mit un pied sur chaque parti, et la France s'en trouve bien, jusq'à ce que l'abus de cette même force contra l'étranger eût amené, plus tard, des représailles si funestes'.

¹¹ Stated in a letter in *La Gazette de France* Friday 17 Jun. 1831. On the same day the ambassador *ad interim* in Paris during Granville's leave of absence (16 Jun. to 6 Jul.) informed Palmerston of Lafayette's 'Declaration of Hostility to the existing form of Government' [PRO FO 27/429 (2)].

¹² *Guest* 23.

¹³ *Ibid.* 23-4.

¹⁴ *Ilchester II* 276.

¹⁵ *Ridley N&E* 94.

¹⁶ *The Times* Tuesday 3 Apr. 1833. Joseph remained secluded until he established himself near Northampton.

¹⁷ Lucien remained in England conducting a duel with *The Times* over the concept of Bonapartism, defending *La Famille* against imputations by 'private correspondents' relaying republican and royalist propaganda from Paris, published there by the Republican *La Tribune des départements*. The gauntlet was thrown down by *The Times* on 29 July and picked up by Lucien on 5 August. He responded to the question 'where are all those Buonapartes?' posed in Paris and repeated in London by explaining the law of proscription – a condition not well grasped by the newspapers in London. *The Times* questioned Lucien again five days later, and he responded on 22 August in such a way that the paper could no longer dismiss the Napoleonic heritage. Eight days later, *The Times* published a letter originally written in 1830 by Joseph addressed to Lafayette, as well as its reply, in which the two had argued over the best governmental system following the July Revolution. Interest in the post-Napoleonic Bonapartes by Britain's leading newspaper dates from this important exchange. Lucien had surrendered to the British in December 1812, and his opposition to Napoleon had made him a hero in England where he was able to settle until after the war.

¹⁸ According to Joseph, Louis Napoleon's apartment cost just under £20 a month, but it is not known where he stayed after leaving Park Crescent. But this figure cannot be believed, as an annual rent of £240 would have been sufficient to acquire any of London's finest houses, for which there is no evidence. Joseph must have meant either £20 *per annum*, or possibly £20 for the duration of the stay.

¹⁹ *The Times* Tuesday 7 May 1833.

²⁰ PRO FO 27/460 (57), Palmerston to Granville for the attention of the Duc de Broglie 2 Apr. 1833.

²¹ HCM *Annual Change of Quarter Book* ff.181, 188.

²² *Guest* 24.

²³ *Hortense I* iii 347.