

## Chapter Eight

### *1855: The Emperor in England*

IN NOVEMBER 1852, Louis Napoleon instructed Walewski, ambassador in London since June 1851, to suggest to Malmesbury the possibility of his marrying Princess Adelaide, daughter of Feodora and Ernst von Hohenlohe-Langenburg. Feodora was the second child of Victoire von Saxe-Coburg-Saalfield by her first marriage to Karl von Leiningen, while Victoire was Queen Victoria's mother by her second marriage to Edward, duke of Kent. Thus if Louis Napoleon married Adelaide, Britain and France would be tied by blood. On 13 December, Walewski made his formal request, and Malmesbury, who had foreseen the proposal following Louis Napoleon's rejections by the guardians of several European princesses, informed Victoria. He stated that although earnest the proposal had been indirectly conducted in order to strengthen Anglo-French relations. This was true, but Louis Napoleon also realized the advantages accruing to him from a matrimonial alliance with a member of the influential House of Coburg, soon to rule over seven-tenths of the world.

Queen Victoria was not keen on the idea. She wrote Derby on 14 December enclosing the draft of a letter addressed to Malmesbury for him to correct as he saw fit, stressing her essential neutrality and observing that 'the only proper persons to refer to for the consideration of and decision on so serious a proposal are the parents of the Princess herself'.<sup>1</sup> Derby suggested adding a paragraph that underscored the fact that Adelaide was a Protestant. Walewski should be 'fully persuaded of the strong religious persuasion of the Princess, of the extreme improbability of any change of opinion on her part, and of the evils inseparable from a difference of opinion on such a subject between the Emperor and his intended Consort'.<sup>2</sup> This ploy was designed to make Louis Napoleon withdraw the proposal, thereby excusing Victoria from the prospect of having to influence a decision and perhaps damaging relations with the empire before they had properly begun.

Louis Napoleon had hoped to gain Victoria's consent, which would have been enough for the marriage to go ahead. On her reluctance to become involved, he took the advice implicit in her communication and had Walewski inform Malmesbury on December 22 that he would after all approach the Hohenlohe-Langenburgs directly. Feodora and Ernst were horrified at the idea of their young daughter marrying a middle-aged Bonaparte, emperor of the French or not, and they flatly refused.

However, by the time Louis Napoleon was informed of this, Adelaide had already been forgotten. Walewski, on his way to put pressure on the prospective in-laws, saw Cowley in Paris on 31 December only to be told that Louis Napoleon had decided to marry Eugénie de Montijo, the scion of a minor Spanish noble family. On Saturday 22 January 1853, Louis Napoleon announced his engagement to a surprised and astonished deputation of the three organs of his authority, the *Sénatus-Consulte*, *Corps Législatif*, and *Conseil d'État*. One week later, the civil ceremony was performed followed by the solemnization at the cathedral of Notre Dame on Sunday 1 February. Humiliated at the royal courts of Europe like his uncle, Louis Napoleon had also chosen to marry his Joséphine.

Whether Eugénie was the appropriate choice of consort to the empire politically and Louis Napoleon personally was questioned. Drouyn de Lhuys threatened to resign; Saint-Arnaud no longer guaranteed the support of the army; and Persigny never forgave her for destroying his plans for a 'significant' matrimonial alliance.

Lord John Russell thought the marriage was ‘a lowering of the Imperial dignity with a vengeance!’ and reckoned that a union with ‘a well-behaved young Frenchwoman’<sup>3</sup> would have been better.

In England, however, his view was a minority one, and Eugénie was reckoned to have endowed the empire with substance, convention, and stability. The *Illustrated London News* had first brought the proposed marriage to the attention of English readers on 4 December 1852. Clearly, Walewski had not read this, or been properly briefed, otherwise he would have seen the extensive coverage with numerous engravings of the imperial couple and the ceremony executed by Samuel Read, William Thomas, and the marine painter James Carmichael, etched for the paper by John Gilbert. Illustrations of the bridal cake, Eugénie in her bridal costume in a special ‘Imperial Marriage Supplement’, her morning costume, the imperial carriage, early portraits of her in Spain, and a dozen views of balls and banquets made this the first high profile marriage anywhere marketed for popular consumption in the way that has become universally fashionable since.

The *Illustrated London News* underwent two significant changes of personnel at this time. In 1852, the songwriter and journalist Charles Mackay, late of the Radical *Glasgow Argus* from which he had become politically estranged, took over the editorship from Ingram and began writing the leaders. In 1853, a new Paris correspondent was writing the many thousands of words on the bride. Ingram had wished for a woman’s viewpoint over the period of the marriage and before his retirement he offered the post to none other than Marguerite Power, niece to Lady Blessington.

In addition to being highly articulate and very sympathetic to Louis Napoleon, Power made one further contribution to Anglo-French attitudes through the person of Eugénie herself. Power became the first journalist to properly inform English readers that Eugénie had been educated in England and was also partly of British blood since her maternal grandfather was William Kirkpatrick of Dumfries, a successful merchant commissioned American consul in Madrid in 1800. Power pointed out that his grandfather had fought for the Jacobite cause at Culloden, while an earlier ancestor had participated in the assassination of Comyn the Younger at Dumfries in 1306 on the orders of Robert Bruce, who had thereby engineered a *coup d’état* of his own. With this impeccably romantic and fashionably anti-English background, Eugénie – considered by contemporaries to be the most beautiful consort in Europe – was able to affect the English public psyche in ways the perfect English gentleman in the Tuileries could never have done by himself.

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That Louis Napoleon’s first state visit should have been to England was natural since the fledgling Second Empire had no other firm friends in Europe. But it was also necessary due to the Crimean War, a conflict originating in the long Franco-Russian struggle to acquire ecclesiastical dominion over the Holy Sites of Palestine for their respective Christian denominations.

The Catholic Church in France saw Louis Napoleon as the saviour of society, and had, in the main, supported both the *coup d’état* and the imperial leap. In return, Louis Napoleon actively defended the rights of Latin clergy and pilgrims in Jerusalem and Constantinople against those of the Græco-Russian Orthodox Church. His initial successes led to the retaliatory appointment, in January 1853, of Aleksandr Menshikov – a veteran of the Russian campaigns against Napoleon – as Tsar

Nikolai's representative in Constantinople. Menshikov denied Catholics the right to pray two days each week at the alleged tomb of the Virgin, and insisted that none of their ceremonies could take place anywhere before Orthodox ones – two or three times the longer – had been completed. A diplomatic row resulted in Louis Napoleon sending a small fleet of warships to the island of Salamis, in March, where he hoped Britain would join them, knowing that Britain was unequivocally opposed to Nikolai's perceived ultimate objectives in Turkey.

The stalemate seemed intractable, and since there was as yet no direct threat to Turkey to justify British involvement, Louis Napoleon's lead was not taken. The threat came, however, when Nikolai sent an ultimatum to the Ottoman sultan, 'Abdul Majid, demanding recognition of his right to protect directly the ten million Orthodox subjects of the Sublime Porte. The sultan rejected it and an army of 120,000 Russians occupied Muntena and Moldova in June. A final move towards a diplomatic solution initiated by Louis Napoleon failed when 'Abdul Majid repudiated the Vienna Note peace settlement – the July directive of a conference of ambassadors to which he had first assented – on 20 August, and which Nikolai had signed. On 4 October, he declared war on Russia.

Since June, a British fleet – now combined with the French – lay anchored at Besika Bay, southwest of the Dardanelles, ready to support the Turks without threatening Russia. Then, on 30 November, a Russian fleet destroyed six Turkish warships at anchor off Sinope. It was a legitimate but unilateral military act, as the Russians were equipped with *obusiers* – exploding shells launched from special steam barges and cannon invented by Henri Paixhans – whereas the Turkish fleet fired solid shot, or even cannonballs from the previous century. Ignorance of this technicality was widespread in England, sparking off such outrage at the 'bear' tugging the coat away from the 'sick man of Europe' that Britain's military inertia was even blamed on Prince Albert, who was denounced as a Russian spy. On the same day as the Russian attack, Lord Clarendon, foreign secretary since 21 February, ordered the British fleet to move to the Black Sea, and France followed suit.

On 29 January 1854, Louis Napoleon made a final attempt at peace by writing directly to the tsar, but the curt reply was little short of a challenge. France and Britain, now informal allies, secured the unofficial co-operation of Austria and sent an ultimatum to St Petersburg the following month, demanding that the tsar withdraw all his troops from the Danubian principalities. On 12 March, the Treaty of Constantinople was signed between Britain, France, and Turkey, promising military aid to the sultan in the event of full-scale Russian aggression. On 19 March, Nikolai rejected the ultimatum, and Britain and France declared war nine days later. A further protocol was signed at Vienna on 9 April between France, Austria, Britain, and Prussia 'for the Maintenance of the Integrity of the Ottoman Empire', and on the following day the Convention of London was signed by Clarendon and Walewski, confirming and restating the earlier treaty. The convention was ratified on 18 April, Britain and France were formally allied, and Louis Napoleon secured his long cherished objective, succeeding where – according to him – Napoleon had failed.

The state visit was 'in the air' before the outbreak of war. In the autumn of 1853, some Paris papers circulated the rumour that Queen Victoria had already invited Louis Napoleon for November, a rumour first printed in *The Sun* and then taken from it into the *Illustrated London News* in the last week of October. Cowley, taken by surprise, wrote to Clarendon asking for clarification, but Clarendon, who was equally nonplussed, could not give it. He informed Victoria who told him to tell Cowley that 'there never was the slightest idea of inviting the Emperor of the French', and that he

should make it clear that there 'would be no intention of the kind ... The Queen feels sure that the Emperor has had these reports put in himself'.<sup>4</sup>

Another awkward incident came when the duke of Cambridge, who had been appointed commander-in-chief of the 1<sup>st</sup> division of the army in the expeditionary force to the Crimea, left England on 10 April with instructions to meet Louis Napoleon in Paris before going on to Vienna. Clarendon committed a *faux pas* by suggesting that he accept the invitation to stay at the Tuileries. But as the duke was first cousin to Victoria this had royal implications. The queen expressed her indignation to Aberdeen, observing that it was 'unusual', since:

no Prince comes to this Palace unless he is a very near relation or particular friend ... Clarendon replied that it was 'because the Emperor wished it', which rather shocked the Queen ... [She] must and will protest, for she cannot mix up personal friendship with a political Alliance. The former is the result of the experience of years of mutual friendship, and cannot be carried by storm... There would be nothing unusual in apartments being offered to the Duke of Cambridge, and declined by him ... without anybody's construing it into an affront.<sup>5</sup>

The duke of Cambridge moved in to the British Embassy and Louis Napoleon took no offence.

The meetings went very well:

Cries of 'Vivent les Anglais' heard in different directions, the people very respectful. After breakfast went in state to the Tuileries: the reception of the Emperor Louis Napoleon cordial and dignified; his conversation open and candid ... I presented to him a letter from the Queen, which pleased him much. [12 April] started for the Champs de Mars on horseback with the Emperor, to be present at the Great Review he had prepared for me of about 30,000 men ... which gave me a very favourable opinion of the French Army and proved the cordiality of feelings which now so happily exist between the two nations, long it is hoped to last! [13 April] The Emperor had a good deal of conversation with me on various subjects, which was most interesting. He is extremely judicious in his remarks. [15 April] the Emperor came and paid me a visit in state. His conversation was as usual interesting, and he was very communicative.<sup>6</sup>

The duke's visit was complicated by the fact that he had taken 'Miss F.' with him, hismorganatic wife who was not accepted by everyone as the duchess of Cambridge. Clarendon was worried that she would 'be a constant source of embarrassment to himself and to others';<sup>7</sup> not so much in Paris, where presumably anything went, but rather in Constantinople, where it allegedly did not. The duke and duchess enjoyed Louis Napoleon's company to such an extent that the duke delayed his departure for the Crimea, for which he was much criticized at home although Clarendon hailed the tour as 'a great political success'.<sup>8</sup>

The duke's favourable impression of the French army was transmitted back to England. Although both armies would be let down by inefficiency and inertia at the administrative and leadership level, the new generation of *La Grande Armée* was an impressive sight on the parade ground. On 3 July, Louis Napoleon invited Prince Albert to review it at Boulogne in September: 'I need not tell your Highness how pleased I should be to show you my soldiers'.<sup>9</sup>

Albert, always suspicious of Louis Napoleon, nevertheless accepted the offer, which after all had amounted to little more than a personal invitation. He arrived at Boulogne on 4 September where he remained for four days, writing daily at least once to Victoria:

The Emperor thaws more and more ... I withdrew with him to his sitting-room ... in order that he might smoke his cigarette, in which occupation, to his amazement, I could not keep him company ... During the six hours which I passed in the carriage with the Emperor alone, we discussed all the topics

of home and foreign policy, material and personal, with the greatest frankness, and I can say but good of what I heard.<sup>10</sup>

It would be a rare moment of sympathy from Prince Albert.

Not everybody saw this meeting in the same serious light *Punch*, careful not to overstep the bounds imposed by the Alliance, said nothing but ‘reminded’ its readers of a report on a Boulogne review of troops the previous year:

It is said that ‘the authorities’ are making extensive preparations for the reception of Louis Napoleon at Boulogne. As this is not his first visit, and as it is usual on occasions of great public ceremonials to refer to ‘precedents’, we may expect to find the ‘authorities’ searching their annals in order to discover how Louis Napoleon was formerly received. It is not necessary to go very far back in making the inquiry, as it is as recent as 1840 that Louis Napoleon was ‘received’ by the authorities of the place ... It is quite clear from the events of the last four years that the watering place alluded to was, in 1840, wholly unacquainted with the real sentiments of the French nation. We must suppose that, in 1853, it comes much nearer the mark.<sup>11</sup>

*Punch* treated the proposed state visit with the same indirect mockery, but most welcomed it. Lord Dalhousie explained his feelings employing an ornithological metaphor: ‘I would much rather see Louis Napoleon in England than the Orleans lot. I would far rather be seen to consort with the eagle than the cuckoo. I think better of the bird of prey that openly seizes than of the sneaking interloper that hustles its kin out of the family nest’.<sup>12</sup> Dalhousie, appointed governor-general of British India in 1848, kept a keen eye on European developments through correspondence and visits, believing that although the French were still inferior to Britain as a naval power, they were nevertheless ‘a more formidable antagonist’ in 1854 than during the Napoleonic Era. It was therefore essential that good relations should be maintained, and there was no more effective way of achieving this than by personal contact: ‘I have rejoiced over the Prince’s visit to Boulogne – heartily hope the Emperor may come to England, and the Empress too – and still more heartily hope that the Queen, Prince, and Prince of Wales may go to Paris next year. It would be among the wisest acts of a wise reign’.<sup>13</sup>

The new Anglo-French Alliance was also not universally applauded. Croker confessed that ‘in the new aspect of affairs, and especially the *entente cordiale* ... I feel that I am out of date ... I have a strong conviction that the present folly ... is likely to be short-lived, and to end in a terrible crisis’.<sup>14</sup> The earl of Lonsdale, although another aging opponent of Napoleon, nevertheless put Croker straight in a reply of some considerable prescience:

[Louis Napoleon is] a saviour in putting down the republic ... The world has changed its aspect; two great powers have arisen and are increasing in force and strength, Russia and America; and the union of France and England seems necessary to resist them ... it was the best piece of luck having such a man turn up.<sup>15</sup>

For Prince Albert, significantly, the temporary fair opinion of Louis Napoleon did not result from his Englishness – a quality Albert ignored – but his Germanic touches. Louis Napoleon spoke *Hochdeutsch* without an accent and was conversant with Romantic German literature, especially the works of Schiller, and perhaps he knew how to flatter his guest. At any rate, it was during the Boulogne visit that Albert let Louis Napoleon know that a state visit to England would be regarded favourably, which was as far as he could go without extending a formal invitation. But that was all the encouragement Louis Napoleon needed. On the day Albert left Boulogne,

Louis Napoleon wrote a flattering letter to Victoria carefully extolling the virtues her husband may or may not have had. It was the right approach, however, for no praise of Prince Albert could be high enough for her. 'Matters stand as well as possible with regard to the visit', she wrote Clarendon on 24 September. 'In the Queen's opinion, the Emperor can come if he likes, and if prevented, is bound to nothing. Should he ask when his visit would be most agreeable to the Queen, the middle of November would be the time'.<sup>16</sup>

Louis Napoleon suggested to Cowley that a later visit would be preferable as it would imply a greater duration of friendship. Once again, he inadvertently annoyed the queen:

The Emperor Napoleon's answer to Lord Cowley ... renders it probable to the Queen that he was not anxious to have the general invitation changed into a special one, obliging him to come or to refuse. The answer is almost a refusal now, and has not improved our position. The Queen would wish that no anxiety should be shown to obtain the visit, now that it is quite clear to the Emperor that he will be 'le bienvenu' at any time. His reception here ought to be a boon to him and not a boon to us.<sup>17</sup>

Although a certain amount of jostling for primacy was evident on both sides, Victoria was technically right. The ancient kingdom of England hardly required the presence of the newfashioned emperor as much as he needed to be seen in the shadows of Windsor Castle. But Louis Napoleon had had a point too, and if the state visit had taken place so soon after the political alliance it might have appeared contrived. But the matter was academic, as Louis Napoleon eventually got his way.

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At the beginning of February 1855, with the four-month siege of Sevastopol proving that the leadership was not equal to the bravery of the soldiers, Louis Napoleon considered taking personal command of the combined army in an attempt to extricate the Allies from their plight. This suggestion horrified the French and English, although for very different reasons. For France it was question of succession since the empire still had no direct heir, and Plon-Plon, who had already been to the front and returned early in some disgrace, refused to join Louis Napoleon, in the event of whose death Jérôme would be declared regent. People realized that the empire would effectively collapse by falling into the hands of an ageing non-entity and his self-serving Republican son. Queen Victoria appreciated this: 'The Emperor's meditated voyage ... I think most alarming; in fact, I don't know how things are to go on without him, independent of the great danger he exposes himself to besides. I own it makes one tremble, for his life is of such immense importance'.<sup>18</sup>

But there was more to this opposition than pragmatism. With the emperor in personal command of the allied armies, there was a chance that he would achieve what English strategists had failed to accomplish. France would take the laurels and be seen to do so before the world, something 'we never could bear'.<sup>19</sup> Some believed that Louis Napoleon was merely after glory and they suggested that he might find a better place for it than the Crimea. The *Illustrated London News* (24 February 1855) reckoned it had found the perfect location – he should 'take his place':

as Generalissimo of the French Army of the Rhine. The post would be one of danger and of glory; but with the humiliation of both Prussia and Russia, and the re-establishment of the kingdom of Poland in the perspective, it would be one in which his presence and example, and the enthusiasm excited by his name, would be of more benefit to the common cause than anything which he could accomplish in the Crimea.

This serious ‘advice’ implied the kind of absurd military idealism Louis Napoleon would be criticized for in the future, and of which he was more often than not entirely innocent.

In January 1855, the Peelite-Whig coalition under Lord Aberdeen resigned when it opposed an inquiry into the condition of the army and supply services. Queen Victoria asked Russell, Aberdeen’s minister without office, to form a new ministry. He failed, and on 5 February she reluctantly accepted Palmerston as her new premier. Within a few weeks, Russell – whose actions had precipitated Aberdeen’s resignation – was brought into Palmerston’s administration as secretary for the colonies to replace Sidney Herbert. His first task was to go on a tour to assess the situation, during which he met Louis Napoleon in Paris:

I spoke to him of the alarm caused in England by the report that he was going to the Crimea. I told him I thought it was leaving a great part for a little part; that the direction of negotiations, the decision upon the affairs of Europe, the government of France were a great work; the direction of a siege was in comparison a small affair ... He had observed that every suggested operation was stopped by the objection of some other general; that if he were there he could order the best operation the military men could project to be undertaken ... Unless something of this kind were done ... we should be obliged to embark with shame.<sup>20</sup>

Louis Napoleon was perhaps the first man of any substance during the war to understand that few of its leaders had any idea how to conduct it. The campaign was the first technologically ‘modern’ conflict but most of the commanders had had their training during the line-and-musket days of the Napoleonic Era. Both the British and French armies had seen no serious action since 1815 outside India and North Africa respectively. Louis Napoleon’s talents and training, although largely untried, had been formed in the 1830s and he was certainly more familiar with artillery usage than either of the two principal commanders, Lord Raglan and Saint-Arnaud, now *grand écuyer* and marshal. Louis Napoleon’s understanding of shells and armour had already resulted in the invention of coast attack ships, based on his idea of 4-inch thick rolled iron plating (a new concept) moulded over shallow draught steam barges that could shell land defences while sitting still and deflecting all but the most penetrating of explosive enemy shot.

There was little doubt that a single man with authority was preferable to a council of generals, but whether that man should be Louis Napoleon was less certain. He was under no illusion as to his merits as a general: ‘I do not pretend to be a military genius, but if I go I shall at least relieve the Generals from the responsibility which is weighing them down and of which I am not afraid’.<sup>21</sup> But it was Russell’s argument that won the day, if not the argument, and reluctantly Louis Napoleon agreed to put his plan aside.

Meanwhile, Cowley had attached himself to the theoretical Crimean staff. In 1854, he asked for a transfer to Constantinople where he thought he might be more useful, but Clarendon rejected it. In January 1855, he considered resigning altogether but Clarendon denied him again. A week after Russell’s conversation, Cowley let fly his bombshell to Clarendon:

Now having done all I can to prevent the Emperor’s going I have a regular longing to go with him. Would you object if he asked me? ... I might also be of some little use in communicating between H.M. and Lord Raglan, and if any attempt at overtures for peace were made to H.M. directly ... my presence might be some check on him.<sup>22</sup>

Cowley explained that the idea was his, but as he was then hardly likely to be invited he had bluntly asked whether he might go and Louis Napoleon had agreed without reservations.

Louis Napoleon's measured retreat gave him an opportunity for the state visit and Cowley was requested to enquire whether it could take place after Easter. By 18 March, it was agreed that the week following Easter – with Sunday avoided for denominational reasons – would be suitable, and it was fixed for Monday 16 to Saturday 21 April. Writing to Prince Albert, Earl Granville, now lord president of the council, maintained that the Cabinet was unprepared to receive him so soon as he was 'sure none have at present a comprehensive plan to submit to the conference over which your Royal Highness and the Emperor will preside at Windsor'.<sup>23</sup>

The press had different views of the visit. *The Times* published *Visit of the Emperor and Empress of the French to England* on 29 March written by Edward Pigott, a close student of French politics and founder of the *Leader* for which he was encouraging Alexander Kinglake to write his Crimean War articles. Pigott emphasized the necessity of the alliance against Russia but enjoined Britain not to forget the means by which Louis Napoleon had obtained the absolute power he was putting to such good use. By the time Louis Napoleon was on his way to the coast, the *Illustrated London News* (14 April) had abandoned all caution:

The coming of the French Emperor ... the nephew of our great enemy, is a greater fact in the world's history than treaties signed or battles won. It is the seal on the alliance of France and England ... the two great nations of the West will henceforth march together in the cause of charity, religion, and civilisation. A strange life has been that of the Emperor Napoleon ... when he passes through the streets of our metropolis – applauded, admired, respected by all – he will point out to his fair wife places more interesting to both than the old towers of Westminster ... He will show her the house in King-street where he passed much of his thoughtful exile; he will point out the pavement where ... he braved even ridicule in testimony that he owed a duty of protection to the country whose free soil had afforded him a temporary home. Verily, that special constable's staff is not the least honourable of the trophies won by Louis Napoleon!

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The day before the arrival, Queen Victoria inspected the suite of rooms set aside for her guests at Windsor Castle then remained to oversee the final preparations while Prince Albert travelled to Dover to meet them, leaving Windsor at 7 o'clock in the evening while Victoria dealt with her nerves. For her such official occasions were always a source of great agitation; for Albert they were no more than the business to which he had been so impeccably raised at the little court in Coburg.

On Monday morning, Albert left the Lord Warden Hotel with Lord Alfred Paget, Liberal member for Lichfield and chief equerry to the royal household, Major-General Charles Grey, one of his private secretaries, and Captain Francis Seymour, groom-in-waiting and deputy ranger of Windsor Great Park. They walked the short distance from the esplanade along Admiralty pier to the landing place, on a boarded walk carpeted with crimson cloth, to await the arrival of the imperial vessel. Unfortunately, the coastal weather in the morning was not as kind as the Berkshire evening before, and a fog had drifted in, reducing visibility to less than a hundred yards.

The weather on the French side, however, was fine. Louis Napoleon and Eugénie, who had arrived at Calais the night before, boarded the warship *Pélican* in sunshine. The steamer weighed anchor at 9:30 under Admiral Vicomte de Chabannes, a scion of one of France's oldest families, piloted by Captain Luke Smithett of the Royal &

Imperial Mailpacket Company. Louis Napoleon was dressed in the uniform of a general of division – blue tunic and red trousers – and the *Legion d'honneur*, while Eugénie sported a grey *paletot*, *chapeau de paille*, and a sturdy dress of Royal Stuart Tartan in recognition of her distant Scottish ancestry. The French suite was of course large: Jean de Vaillant, a Napoleonic veteran, senator, marshal, minister of war, and *Grand Maréchal du Palais*; the Duc de Bassano, now *Grand Chambellan*; the Duc de Montebello, son of a celebrated Napoleonic marshal and aide-de-camp; Fleury, now *Ecuyer de l'Empereur*; Edgar Ney, *Premier Veneur* and youngest son of the Napoleonic marshal executed by the Bourbons; and the Marquis de Toulangeon, *officier d'ordonance*. There were also the wives of these and five household staff for Eugénie headed by Charles Tascher de la Pagerie, one of the late Empress Joséphine's relatives.

Two hours later, the *Élican* docked to a gun salute from the great castle overlooking the port while the band of the Royal Buckinghamshire Militia struck up the official anthem of the Second Empire, *Partant pour la Syrie*.<sup>24</sup> The imperial couple disembarked, Albert shook Louis Napoleon's hand, clicked his heels, and bowed to Eugénie before offering her his arm. All stood still while Town Mayor William Payn delivered a brief welcoming address, after which the Walewskis, who had stayed at the Royal Ship Hotel, conducted the imperial suite to the Lord Warden Hotel, walking a few paces behind Albert and the imperial guests, all between the militia and police within the palisades erected to keep back the crowds. Because of the delay there was only a brief rest before lunch was served, but enough for Eugénie to exchange her *paletot* for a black velvet mantle, her plain straw bonnet for one of blue drawn silk with a tartan plaid ribbon and black silk veil, and her heavy dress for a lighter one of large plaid tartan silk.

The Lord Warden Hotel, opened in September 1853, had been built for the South Eastern Railway Company as a three-storey italianate block of the Doric order. It contained over a hundred rooms and boasted an unrivalled location with a view of the town, harbour, and castle, while the sea lapped the walls of the coffee room. Part of the building had been entirely remodelled to accommodate Albert and the imperial couple for their brief stay, decorated florally by the family firm of Epps & Co. of Ashford and Maidstone whose noted medical scions would soon play an altogether very different role in Louis Napoleon's life. The imperial couple was given a drawing-room and gold-trimmed crimson satin walnut-panelled dressing-rooms, while Eugénie was provided with a toilet chamber of crimson satin, lace, and flounces of Mechelen, the exclusive lace trim from Belgium. Lunch was served in the spacious *salle-à-manger*, an oblong room with a pair of Doric columns as the entrance and three chandeliers.

After lunch, the party retired to the grand saloon, where a dais had been erected, to hear the official welcoming address delivered by the barrister William Bodkin, recorder since 1834. Already moved by the warmth with which the people of Dover had received the *entente cordiale*, Louis Napoleon replied:

I am exceedingly grateful that your Queen has allowed me ... an occasion to pay my respects to her and to show my sentiments of esteem and sympathy for the English people. I hope that the two nations will be always united in peace and in war, for I am convinced that it will be for the welfare of the whole world and for their own prosperity. I am ... grateful to you for the sentiments you have expressed towards myself and the Empress, and I hope you will be the interpreter of my sentiments and hers to your countrymen.<sup>25</sup>

As Louis Napoleon made his way out of the room to a standing ovation *The Illustrated London News* (21 April) reported how the ordinarily phlegmatic civic dignitaries rushed him in a spontaneous desire to demonstrate affection:

It was with some difficulty that the grave and learned representatives of the municipality, with his worshipful the Mayor, were restrained, as they retired backwards from the presence of his Majesty, from giving expression to their feelings of exuberant enthusiasm; and it was only when the magic word 'etiquette' was whispered, that a more enthusiastic member of the Corporation, who had already delivered himself of 'One – two – three,' was awed into silence, and prevented from inflicting upon their Majesties the remainder of a genuine round of Kentish Fire.<sup>26</sup>

The entire port of Dover had been decorated with flowers and flags, and endowed with a temporary triumphal arch, similarly decorated, for the imperial couple to walk through on its way to and from the hotel. The interior of the Croydon & South Eastern railway station next to the hotel had been filled with flowers, flags, and evergreens. The company supplied two royal carriages, the first for the imperial couple, Albert, Paget, Grey, and Seymour, and the second for the Walewskis at the head of the remainder of the party. As Eugénie entered her carriage, one of the directors of the company knelt before her, offering a bouquet of flowers as those onlookers who had been lucky enough to obtain tickets to watch cheered. At 2:45 precisely the train pulled out of the station.

The crowds lining not only every street but also the entire length of permanent way from Dover to Tunbridge were far in excess of the local population. At Tunbridge, where the train stopped for five minutes to take on water, there was real fear that the throng would precipitate someone onto the track as it strained to catch a glimpse of the occupants. Field labourers, villagers, and schoolchildren all ran up close to the line as the train passed to wave hats and flowers, and of course to cheer. 'No one could have anticipated anything like the continuous ovation which must have rung in the Emperor's ears almost without ceasing from Dover to Windsor', continued *The Illustrated London News*. 'The thing was incredible; there really never was anything like it'. As the train passed through Reigate, the children of the Philanthropic School lined the platform and cheered while at Norwood it was those of the Industrial School. At Croydon, it was the cadets from Addiscombe who gave the train a particularly hearty cheer, in unison, to the sound of a band playing as it steamed through the station. It cannot have escaped Louis Napoleon that seven years previously he had travelled on the down line of the same route as a pretender, an ordinary passenger whose departure had barely registered. Now, for five days, he would be the most popular man in England.

At five o'clock the train entered Bricklayer's Arms terminus to the sound of *Partant pour la Syrie* played by the band of the Coldstream Guards. The arrival platform was covered with scarlet cloth while the exit end was a mass of flowers whose fragrance filled the normally filthy station air. About 1,500 people had squeezed into a seven-tier stand that had been erected for a thousand spectators while booking offices and standing trains were filled to capacity – even the roofs – with elegantly dressed spectators of both sexes. Francis Moon, lord mayor of London, and various railway dignitaries met the party, and Albert again led Eugénie while Louis Napoleon walked on his free side and a little behind, slightly shaken by the tremendous cheering neither had expected, as they bowed to the crowd every few paces. As they emerged from the station into the yard by Swan Walk they were met by the 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards and the Coldstream Guards.

At first, it had been planned that the guests should travel straight to Windsor from Dover, but at the last moment it was decided by the London authorities that they should process through the capital and take the Great Western Railway from Paddington. The route was published in the press on the Morning of Monday 16, giving no time for elaborate decorations. Nevertheless, people lined the streets, filled balconies, thrust themselves out of windows, climbed onto monuments, and stood on top of stationary omnibuses to see the imperial couple pass, while all sorts of banners and flags were pinned up wherever they might fit. The *cortège* consisted of six phaetons, the first four flanked by outriders in scarlet livery and escorted by the Guards. Louis Napoleon and Eugénie sat together in the first phaeton facing the horses with Prince Albert on the seat in front of them facing the rear.

The route was designed to be substantial, beginning on Old Kent Road then moving left into New Kent Road by the Bricklayer's Arms public house and then St George's Road and Westminster Bridge Road to cross the Thames. After passing the Metropolitan District Railway station, it turned right into Parliament Street then Whitehall, Charing Cross, Cockspur Street, Pall Mall, St James's Street, Piccadilly, Hyde Park – in through Apsley gate, out through Victoria gate – left into Uxbridge Road, right into Westbourne Street, Craven Road, then Eastbourne Terrace and Paddington Station. Although Louis Napoleon took a deep interest in everything, his placid and sedentary attitude was seen to alter as he passed the Horse Guards when he stood up and saluted the colours. Then, fulfilling the prediction made by the *Illustrated London News*, as he passed the west end of King Street, he drew Eugénie's attention to its far end where he had passed 'much of his thoughtful exile'.

At Westminster Bridge, naval guns fired a Royal Salute (twenty-one cannonades) in an honour reserved exclusively for the arrival of the reigning British monarch to Parliament. At Charing Cross, the band of the Royal Marines played *Partant pour la Syrie* as the *cortège* passed the Admiralty. At Trafalgar Square, the base and lower half of Nelson Column (a decade before Landseer's lions) and the statue of Charles I were covered by spectators. The London clubs to which Louis Napoleon had been invited as an honorary member were particularly appreciative of his presence. Members, either forgetful of their sobriety or unable to disguise its absence, assembled in Pall Mall to yell and wave with club windows and balconies filled with women – a rare honour at that time. Malmesbury had an excellent view: 'the streets were choked with people. The *cortège* ... [was] enthusiastically cheered ... thousands of people lining the road for the whole distance ... His reception was certainly a triumphant one'.<sup>27</sup>

About 2,500 spectators had obtained tickets to enter Paddington station at half-past three to see the visitors off to Windsor. Every available locomotive had been brought to the station so that when they entered the bells and whistles could be pulled simultaneously, which they did at 6:20 when the *cortège* arrived.

There was also much that was special about the train that took them to Windsor. The rolling stock was the latest six-wheeled fully sprung type furnished in the style of Victoria's private saloon carriage. The locomotive was the *Alma*, the first of a series of seven 4-2-2 'Iron Duke' class engines with eight-foot central driving wheels built by Rothwell & Co. of Bolton to commemorate the war in the Crimea. Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Great Western Railway was still championing its own seven-foot Broad Gauge, and it was on this that Louis Napoleon was taken to Windsor at over seventy miles an hour. One further mark of respect had been reserved for him: on the footplate of the *Alma* was none other than Brunel himself, the Legitimist graciously performing his public duty.

In Windsor, where the townspeople and the royal family had been in a state of excitement never before experienced, the morning had been spent inspecting everything from the imperial suite to the saddle horses Louis Napoleon had had sent on ahead of him. 'All is in a state of bustle and excitement and expectation', Queen Victoria wrote in her journal. 'I have had such trouble with my toilette, dresses, bonnets, caps, mantillas, etc., etc., of every sort and kind ... All the children on the tip top of expectation, dear little Arthur full of the arch and the flags'.<sup>28</sup>

Little Prince Arthur, the queen's seventh child, had been thrilled by the town's most conspicuous monument: the great triumphal wooden arch on Castle Street. This had been finished only just in time and had been meant to imitate the arch in front of the Tuileries, itself inspired by the Arc de Triomphe. It was described by *The Times* on 16 April:

It is 40 feet wide and 50 feet high, divided into three parts, the centre arch being 35 feet high and 20 feet wide. There is an arch on each side, 14 feet high and 6 feet wide, for the accommodation of foot passengers. The panels ... with the insignia of the Orders of the Garter and the Thistle. The upper portion is formed of wreath and scroll, supporting the Imperial Crown and Eagle of France ... decorated with the standards of England, France, Turkey, and Sardinia, the spaces being filled in with crescents. In the centre ... a wreath and ribbon, with the word 'Welcome' written on the latter. The whole of the arch ... decorated with variegated lamps and evergreens.

Another smaller arch had been erected outside the Great Western Railway station where the train would arrive. The station of the rival company, the South Western Railway, situated directly opposite the apartments Louis Napoleon and Eugénie would occupy, had its frontage converted into a brilliant gaslit illumination, as did the Town Hall, whose columns were twined with lamps. Such was the effect in the fading daylight when the imperial couple arrived that *The Times* thought they 'could not easily be exceeded even in our own huge metropolis'. Three days later, however, the paper would be proved wrong.

The procession had taken longer than anticipated, and the overall delay, which had by then increased to almost two hours, ensured that Louis Napoleon and Eugénie did not arrive at Windsor until shortly before 7 o'clock. They were met by the Grenadier Guards, Foot Guards, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards under Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis Williams while the national school children gave *ana capella* version of *Partant pour la Syrie*. A detachment of Life Guards under Major George Howard-Vyse escorted the party to the castle where the band of the 94<sup>th</sup> Regiment greeted them with yet another version of the anthem. They entered the Great Hall where Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales, the Princess Royal, the duke of Cambridge, and Leiningen – Adelaide's uncle – met them.

By 8:30 everyone was sitting down to dinner in St George's Hall, and among the guests not associated with the royal family were Palmerston, Clarendon, and Cowley, who had travelled to England at the same time as Louis Napoleon but on another ship. Victoria and Albert sat together with Eugénie next to the prince and Louis Napoleon beside the queen. Victoria's mother, the duchess of Kent, sat at Louis Napoleon's other side while Leiningen was placed beside Eugénie.

'We got on extremely well at dinner', Victoria wrote that night, 'and my agitation seemed to go off very early. The Emperor is so very quiet, his voice is low and soft, and "il ne fait pas de phrases"'.<sup>29</sup> Victoria had also noted her reaction on first meeting her guests:

I cannot say ... how much it felt like a wonderful dream ... I advanced and embraced the Emperor, who received two salutes on either cheek from me, having first kissed my hand. I next embraced the

very gentle, graceful, and evidently very nervous Empress ... then we went up the Grand Staircase, Albert leading the Empress, who, in the most engaging manner, refused to go first, but at length, with graceful reluctance, did so, the Emperor leading me, expressing his great gratification at being here and seeing me, and admiring Windsor.<sup>30</sup>

Frieda Arnold, Baden-born dresser to Victoria, made a note of her first reaction:

The Emperor is small, not handsome, but very determined-looking ... He looks very like the pictures of him that one sees ... but he is less good-looking, as he has deep lines on his face which make him look older. His figure is not at all good, as he has a very hollow chest. But his whole bearing and expression convey calm, gravity and vigour: he looks like a man of of great consequence, although perhaps less prepossessing than his portraits. [He] is quite another person on horseback ... a taller and more handsome figure, and sits so calmly on his horse, with a very imposing and majestic air in his uniform which he lacks when in civilian clothes and on foot, for then he seems ordinary and not good-looking, and seen from close by his features are almost gloomy, and his brow furrowed with earnest thought; his eyes at first sight look almost dull and clouded; but when he speaks, on the other hand, his glance is sharp and lively.<sup>31</sup>

Victoria, on reflection, agreed with her dresser: 'The Emperor is extremely short, but with a head and bust which ought to belong to a much taller man'.<sup>32</sup> Lady Clarendon travelled down to Windsor the day after Louis Napoleon's arrival accompanied by Lady Palmerston. Her first observation almost exactly matched Victoria's. After finding his features 'very curious' and 'melancholy', she observed: 'There is a want of proportion about his figure which takes much off from grace, his head and shoulders have the appearance of belonging to a much taller man than he is – his legs are much too short'.<sup>33</sup>

None of these three women had met Louis Napoleon before. Curiously, Disraeli made a similar observation even though the two men had met several times. Disraeli and his wife were invited to Windsor later: 'when I was presented, Napoleon came forward, and shook hands with me cordially, and spoke some gracious words ... I was very much struck by the smallness of his stature. He did not seem taller than our Queen'.<sup>34</sup> Celebrities are never quite as tall as they are often imagined to be, and this was an example of the way in which this illusion deepened with the greater celebrity of the subject. Disraeli, who must have been well acquainted with Louis Napoleon's five feet six inches, appears to have been surprised that his very athletic imperial leap had not also increased the inside measurement of his legs.

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Although the public emphasis of the *entente cordiale* was a serious enough endeavour to justify the state visit, there was another reason why Louis Napoleon had been invited. In spite of Lord John Russell's persuasive reasoning, Louis Napoleon was still determined to take personal command of the armies, his plan being to invade from the south coast and isolate Sevastopol. Eugénie, who had at first been horrified by the idea, told Victoria on Tuesday that she was reluctantly reconciled to it, which shocked the queen. *The Times* (16 April) was still talking about it as though it were a fact, citing 'certain information from Paris' obtained on 13 April: 'The Emperor's departure for the East is, I have observed, considered certain'. The presence of both the prime minister and the secretary of state for foreign affairs at Windsor had been effected to prevent the early peace Louis Napoleon had mooted as well as to dissuade him from putting his plan into action.

Victoria still found Palmerston disagreeable, but it was fortuitous that he was her prime minister because, as Louis Napoleon was in the habit of saying, 'Avec Lord

Palmerston on peut faire les grandes choses'. Politically, these two men had more in common with one another than with any other man on either side of the Channel. Victoria swallowed her antipathy to her *bête noire*, as Lady Palmerston recalled: 'How curious it is to remember all the resentment the Q. shewed to P. only for advocating the French alliance at the Time of the Emperor's accession – and now he is the only Friend we have now to depend upon'.<sup>35</sup> Palmerston had done a little more than simply advocate the euphemistic 'French alliance' in 1851, but Lady Palmerston was right, and Louis Napoleon was the only friend England could rely on and therefore could ill-afford to lose to a Russian shell in the Crimea. Typically, however, Prince Albert later reckoned exactly the contrary, believing that 'For his schemes he wanted and still wants an ally. England was the only one he could obtain after his assumption of the Imperial Crown'.<sup>36</sup>

On the following day, Tuesday, a meeting was held in Louis Napoleon's sitting-room between him and Albert in which Albert made it clear that England opposed his going out to the front. That the hospitality had been calculated solely to make Louis Napoleon more receptive to this view is not true but it naturally began to have such an effect, and, although Louis Napoleon remained unconvinced, it was clear that a little more goading might see him abandon his proposal. In the meantime there was ample opportunity to take his mind off the discussion while allowing him time to mull it over, which in any case was his preferred manner of reaching a decision. At 3 o'clock, the town mayor of Windsor, John Clode, and Allan Skinner, the recorder, led a procession of nine carriages of national civic dignitaries to deliver addresses of congratulations to the imperial guests. These included one from Francis Moon who took the opportunity to officially invite the imperial couple to the Corporation of London on Thursday for a banquet at the Guildhall.

At 4 o'clock there was a Grand Review in Windsor Great Park of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards, Blues, Carabineers, and the Chestnut Troop Horse Artillery under Lord Cardigan astride his Balaklava charger. Thousands watched the subsequent mock charges from a distance that 'went off remarkably well ... The troops looked well and did well. The Emperor rode his favourite and handsome horse'.<sup>37</sup> This charger was 'Philips', one of sixteen horses brought over from Paris as part of the stud said to be the finest in Europe. It is interesting to note that every one of Louis Napoleon's horses was originally English and bred from stock that had been English for generations. 'Philips' had been bought from Sir John Gerrard of Bryn Hall in the ducal palatinate of Lancaster, a colonel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> regiment of royal Lancashire militia whom Louis Napoleon had met several times as an exile. 'Adonis', a dark brown charger given to Fleury for the duration of the visit, had recently been bought at Tattersall's from none other than Jem Mason.

Queen Victoria's running commentary led her to note that 'The impression is very favourable. There is great fascination in the quiet, frank, manner of the Emperor ... The reception by the public was immensely enthusiastic'.<sup>38</sup> On Tuesday evening there was another Grand Dinner in St George's Hall, at which the band of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards played *Partant pour la Syrie* before launching into a concert of popular English and French light pieces. After dinner there was the customary great ball, and although it did not end until 12:30 it was not a great success. In this case the rather dry, political nature of the invitees undermined it, making it 'rather solemn' according to Lady Clarendon, with 'the pauses between the dances rather too long, and not enough girls invited'.<sup>39</sup>

This last point was in fact the great *société aux pas* Victoria and Albert had perpetrated. That an essentially political occasion need not be without its successful

social events had been proved once and for all at the Congress of Vienna, and there was no reason why the same could not have been achieved at Windsor. Nevertheless, both Victoria and Louis Napoleon enjoyed themselves as together they danced the complex quadrille with seven other couples.

This occasion caused Victoria to draw some celebrated parallels in her journal. She thought it 'strange' to think that she 'the granddaughter of George III, should dance with the Emperor Napoleon, nephew of England's greatest enemy, now my nearest and most intimate ally, in the Waterloo Room, and this ally only six years ago living in this country an exile, poor and unthought of!'<sup>40</sup>

'Unthought of' principally by Victoria, of course, and her arithmetic was also a little weak. But the occasion was certainly curious. The Waterloo Room had been created by covering over the medieval Horn Court to commemorate the great victory over Napoleon, and every 18 June up to 150 veterans were entertained at a banquet on a single table decorated with an elaborate gold centrepiece donated by Portuguese craftsmen in gratitude to the English for liberating the Iberian Peninsula from Napoleonic rule. In addition, the entire room was adorned with large portraits of English and Continental heroes of the opposition to Napoleon. On the occasion of the ball the table was of course removed, but the portraits were also covered over with wall hangings and the name of the room very diplomatically changed to 'The Music Room'.

Victoria's sense of irony could have been further heightened by her pointing out (if she knew) that the very distinctive five-part square dance that had been the chief cause of her comment had been the exclusive development – from a folk-dance – of the First Empire and had been Napoleon's favourite dance. Moreover, the particular quadrille she and Louis Napoleon had danced to had been composed by Louis Jullien, the French conductor and composer of quadrilles resident in England. Jullien had also written the *Vive l'Empereur Galop* especially for the occasion, immediately made available to the public with a reproduced colour painting of Louis Napoleon by Charles Baxter.

On Wednesday 18 April, shortly before noon, a Council of War met formally in Louis Napoleon's sitting-room, suggested and arranged by Palmerston a few days before the visit. The French were represented by Louis Napoleon, Vaillant, and Walewski; the British by Prince Albert, Palmerston, Cowley, Baron Panmure (secretary at war), Sir Charles Wood (first lord of the admiralty since February), and two Napoleonic veterans, Field-Marshal Sir Henry Hardinge and General Sir John Burgoyne.

There were several matters to discuss apart from Louis Napoleon's Crimean idea: the continuing neutrality of Austria, whose purely moral support was seen as an evasion of its responsibilities; the presence of pro-Russian sympathizers in Paris; and the vexed question of Louis Napoleon's desire for an early peace. A natural repugnance of warfare occasionally led Louis Napoleon into premature peace treaties, and by the time he arrived in Windsor he no longer wanted to press ahead in the Crimea if his plan for personal command should be vetoed. Although there was a strong anti-war movement in England led by distinguished men in and out of parliament, the Government did not feel that an early peace settlement would serve Britain's interests unless defeat should become inevitable. But there should be no premature peace so long as 'we see reasonable hope of prosecuting the war with success'.<sup>41</sup>

When the time for lunch arrived and the council had not broken up, Eugénie appealed to Victoria to interrupt it: 'I dare not go in', she declared, 'but your Majesty

can; that is your concern'.<sup>42</sup> Victoria agreed that it had gone on for long enough, entered the room, and the men promised to finish directly. They did not, however, and the women dined alone, but not before Victoria had explained the cause of her concern, reminding them that Louis Napoleon was to be invested with the Garter that afternoon.

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The Most Noble Order of the Garter is the highest and most exclusive chivalric honour in Britain, and the significance of Louis Napoleon's investiture cannot be underestimated. Originally, the selection of knights was egalitarian, but by 1831 changes in the constitution had narrowed the privilege to members of the royal family and their relatives, with the number of companions limited to twenty-five, answerable to the person of the monarch. Further amendments meant that by 1855 the only exceptions to this rule could be – at the discretion of the monarch – foreign rulers of accepted royal blood. Louis Napoleon did not, of course, qualify, and a number of rules had to be bent, if not actually broken, in order to include him in this tradition. Accordingly, the constitution of the order was altered at Victoria's command and he was invested by special statute.

Nevertheless, the idea to invest Louis Napoleon with the Garter was not a decision reached either lightly or quickly. There had been talk of the possibility as early as the previous August, when Albert – who had not yet met Louis Napoleon at Boulogne – had been shocked. But not everyone reacted negatively. On 7 September, Cowley wrote to Clarendon that 'Sebastopol is well worth the Garter',<sup>43</sup> a reference to Louis Napoleon's immediate acceptance and improvement of Sir James Graham's initial plan to attack Sevastopol by sea. By the New Year there were no substantial objections to the proposal.

The ceremony took place shortly after 3 o'clock in the Garter Throne Room, the traditional location for Garter business and ceremonial. Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the duke of Cambridge, and Prince Leiningen entered the room in their purple velvet mantles with crimson hoods drawn back over the elaborate ermine collars. Two pages carried Victoria's long train as she took her seat at the head of the table next to the empty chair reserved for Louis Napoleon. Eugénie and the duchess of Cambridge sat nearby so that they could watch the proceedings, while the royal children and principal members of the imperial suite sat on chairs by the wall.

The Garter King of Arms then called out the sixteen names of the Knights Companions in descending order of seniority as they took their places at the table: the marquess of Exeter, the duke of Richmond, the marquess of Lansdowne, the duke of Buckingham, the marquess of Salisbury, the duke of Cleveland, Earl Grey, the marquess of Abercorn, the marquess of Hertford, the duke of Bedford, the earl of Clarendon, Earl Spencer, Earl Fitzwilliam, the duke of Northumberland, the earl of Ellesmere, and the earl of Aberdeen. They were followed by the officers: Charles Sumner, Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Winchester (Prelate); Samuel Wilberforce, Right Reverend the Bishop of Oxford (Chancellor); Gerald Wellesley, Very Reverend the Dean of Windsor (Registrar); Sir Charles Young (Garter King of Arms); and Admiral Sir Augustus Clifford (Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod).

When everyone had assembled, the Chancellor rose and opened the ceremony by reading the amendment to the constitution, which of course was accepted without dissent. Prince Albert, the duke Cambridge, Black Rod, and the Garter King of Arms were then instructed to leave and conduct the new member to his place. Louis

Napoleon entered the Throne Room with Albert and the duke on either side, preceded by Black Rod and the Garter King of Arms carrying the insignia of the order on a crimson velvet cushion:

The Queen and the Knights of the Garter received His Imperial Majesty standing, and the Emperor ... took a seat in the chair of state on the right hand of Her Majesty ... Garter King of Arms, kneeling, presented the Garter to the Sovereign, and Her Majesty, assisted by his Royal Highness Prince Albert, buckled it on the left leg of the Emperor, the Chancellor pronouncing the admonition. Garter King of Arms presented the Riband with the George, and the Queen put the same over the left shoulder of the Emperor, the Chancellor pronouncing the admonition. The Queen then gave the accolade to the Emperor, and His Imperial Majesty received the congratulations of his Royal Highness Prince Albert, his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, his Serene Highness the Prince of Leiningen, and each of the Knights Companions present.<sup>44</sup>

Clarendon noticed an amusing incident that was understandably not recorded by the press. Louis Napoleon's traditional dress included white stockings and close-fitting silk tights, and when the moment came for Victoria to tighten the Garter that Albert had placed around his leg, he 'did not quite kneel while the Queen "fumbled ostensibly as she always does" to show her unfamiliarity with the slightly indiscreet article of male attire'.<sup>45</sup> Victoria would never have commented on this, of course, and for her 'The Investiture went off very well'.<sup>46</sup> For the duke of Cambridge – who later that day would himself be invested with the *Légion d'honneur* by Louis Napoleon for his services in the Crimea – the chief point to note was that Louis Napoleon 'seemed really overcome, for a moment, by the greatness of his position'.<sup>47</sup> Bishop Wilberforce was selected by Louis Napoleon for special attention: '[He] sent for me ... and talked awhile. He said "This is a remarkable event in my life"'.<sup>48</sup>

The 'accolade' involved Victoria kissing Louis Napoleon on each cheek as was customary only between ruling monarchs – noblemen would be touched with the sword while clerics and others would merely receive the order on its cushion. According to unverifiable but probably accurate accounts, after Louis Napoleon received his two kisses he was heard to whisper in Victoria's ear 'enfin je suis gentilhomme'. The gentleman thanked her afterwards, stating that, as she later recalled: 'C'est un lien de plus entre nous, j'ai prêté serment de fidélité à votre Majesté et je le garderai soigneusement. C'est un grand événement pour moi, et j'espère pouvoir prouver ma reconnaissance envers votre Majesté et son Pays'.<sup>49</sup>

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On the morning of Thursday 19, the remaining party left Windsor Castle to spend the rest of the state visit at Buckingham Palace. At noon the train arrived at the Southampton Railway terminus at Nine Elms in Wandsworth, built in 1838 as *de facto* Victoria's private London station and no members of the public were permitted inside. Instead, the station had been decked out in crimson cloth, flags, and flowers, and was occupied by the 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards under Captain Dudley De Ros, 150 rank and file of the Grenadier Guards, and the band of the Coldstream Guards playing *Partant pour la Syrie*. Outside, people filled Wandsworth Road and the seats erected at either end of Vauxhall Bridge. Victoria was particularly keen to point out to Louis Napoleon the various workers who had come to greet him, especially the entire workforce (2,000 men, boys, and girls in their distinctive white uniforms) of Price's Patent Candle Company of York Road a mile away.

The carriages crossed Vauxhall Bridge, passed along Millbank, went by the Houses of Parliament, along Great George Street and Birdcage Walk, then into Buckingham

Palace where the state band of the Life Guards welcomed them with *Partant pour la Syrie*, and where they were received by the new duke of Wellington and the marquess of Breadalbane, lord chamberlain of the household. A suite of rooms on the first floor overlooking St James's Park had been reserved for the imperial couple, with Louis Napoleon's drawing-room facing out towards Grosvenor Basin, soon to be the site of Victoria Station. There had been no opportunity to decorate these rooms, and most of them were simply furnished with amber, rose, blue, green, and purple hanging silks, and oriental decorative ornaments.

Shortly before 2 o'clock, Louis Napoleon and Eugénie left in a closed carriage pulled by two cream horses from the royal stables. They travelled along a cleared route down The Mall, Charing Cross, the Strand, Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill, past St Paul's Cathedral to Cheapside, to the Bank of England, up Princes Street, and then along Gresham Street to the Guildhall. This time the route had been published well in advance and all sorts of banners and illuminations had been prepared. Although the gaslit show would be reserved for the evening, Louis Napoleon could read his famous dictum 'L'Empire, c'est la paix', first expressed at Bordeaux on 9 October 1852, in tiny gaslamps. It was said that 100,000 people lined The Mall alone, while 20,000 gathered at Charing Cross.

Although these were of course estimated figures it was certainly true that 1,500 people had taken seats in a ninety-foot-square pavilion erected just outside the Guildhall itself, since they had to be counted carefully. It was also true that rooftops were liberally sprinkled with brave, or perhaps foolhardy, sightseers, and some were injured when they slid off. However, their glimpse of the imperial couple would have been no more than that since the carriage was not officially processing and made the journey from Buckingham Palace to the Guildhall in about thirty minutes. As it was a closed coach, most of the spectators did not see the occupants at all, and it was left to *The Times* (20 April) to point out that 'the Empress sat on the Emperor's left hand, and not on his right, as is the custom in this country'.

Once again, the band of the Royal Marines played *Partant pour la Syrie*, this time at the Admiralty from the summit of the entrance archway. When the coach passed St Martin-in-the-Fields, the campanile rang out the most complex and jubilant peal the bell-ringers could produce. The same happened as it passed through the narrow section of the street in front of St Mary-le-Strand and St Clement Danes, the Anglican clergy having been instructed to provide a wave of bells to follow the *cortège* at every possible location. The coach then entered the City of London, which in 1855 still had gates and required permission to enter – a formality waived in this case, as *The Times* drolly observed:

The barrier [was] unguarded by the civic king [lord mayor] against the invasion of his Imperial guests, although, had the Queen come, the ceremony of presenting the city keys would, no doubt, have been still observed. If Napoleon III inherits in such matters the spirit of his uncle, he must have looked ... with no small contempt upon a structure which ... nothing but our love of antiquities could have so long preserved.

St Mary-le-Bow on Cheapside took up the jubilant peal as the carriage passed on to the Bank of England. *The Times* observed that here Louis Napoleon was not only 'within the sound' of the Bow bells but also in sight of them. However, it was unlikely that even his knowledge of London culture extended far enough for him to have made this association. On arriving at the Guildhall, yet another rendition of *Partant pour la Syrie* greeted Louis Napoleon and Eugénie as they entered the building along a raised

platform 140 feet long and covered by an awning, to the great applause of the seated voyeurs in the pavilion.

Sir Francis and Lady Moon – the lord mayor had been granted a baronetcy in advance of the event – greeted their imperial guests as they entered. A raised dais had been constructed on the eastern end of the Great Hall, supporting two elaborate state chairs upholstered in imperial purple and gilded, one with the initial ‘N’ and the other with ‘E’ embroidered on the backrests in gold, each within a laurel wreath. Above these a canopy of rich purple velvet had been erected, the edges of the material trimmed with gold braid, while on each corner a golden imperial eagle sat in the typical imperial posture of hunched wings and open beak.

On the south side of the dais, in eight rows of raised seats, sat the Cabinet ministers and other important guests, while on the north side sat the invited *corps diplomatique* from the embassies of Turkey, Greece, Austria, Portugal, Sardinia, Brazil, Sicily, Sweden, Spain, and the United States. The columns of the hall were adorned with the flags of England, France, and Turkey, below which hung medallion portraits of Victoria and Louis Napoleon, on alternate pillars. The names of the principal Crimean battles up to that time – Alma, Balaklava, and Inkerman – were written above wreaths encircling the English lion and the imperial eagle beneath each of the tall upper windows.

Guests had begun to arrive by 10 o’clock, and included many people Louis Napoleon had already met, such as the duke of Cambridge, Panmure, Clarendon, Palmerston, Hardinge, the marquess of Salisbury, and Sir Charles Fox. But there was also Sir George Grey (home secretary), Charles Blomfield (bishop of London), and Charles Canning (post-master general). There were also some distinguished Frenchmen present. Sir Francis Moon and the Corporation had invited Baron Georges Haussmann (prefect of the Seine), with a suite to London independently but so that the two visits would coincide. Haussmann was accompanied by Claude Delangle (president of the municipal council of Paris), Germain Thibault (vice-president of the chamber of commerce), and Théophile Pelouze (master-general of the Paris mint).

The band of the Royal Horse Guards stood in a balcony over the entrance to the hall, and as the imperial guests entered they of course played *Partant pour la Syrie*. Victoria would complain in her journal that she heard this anthem fourteen times on this day alone, even though she had not been present at all the events. The Corporation mace-bearer and sword-bearer fronted the procession into the hall, representing the two Guildhall statues of Gog and Magog whom it was suggested had been hurriedly sworn in as special constables ‘as a delicate compliment to the Imperial guest’.<sup>50</sup> The mayoral chaplain, Sir Francis and Lady Moon, then Louis Napoleon and Eugénie followed, leading the recorder, the aldermen, common councillors, and finally the Entertainment Committee. *The Times* (20 April):

When the Emperor and Empress, who walked a short distance apart, entered the open space in front of the dais, the Emperor passed for a moment, and bowed to the members of the Common Council, who were ranged on either side. His Imperial Majesty and the Empress then proceeded to their chairs of state, and the Empress, having seated herself, conversed for some moments with the Lady Mayoress. The Emperor, who appeared somewhat fatigued, remained standing ... When the Emperor and Empress reached their places another loud cheer burst from the spectators, and the Lord Mayor, with his attendants, and the Aldermen and members of the Entertainment Committee then retired down the central avenue ... the civic body again reappeared, and the Lord Mayor, accompanied by the Recorder ... approached the Imperial visitors.

The recorder then read out the Corporation address to Louis Napoleon, with Eugénie now also standing.

When the speech concluded with the words ‘we are earnestly anxious further to express to your Imperial Majesty the lively pleasure and respectful admiration with which we have seen you accompanied on this happy occasion by your illustrious Consort Her Majesty the Empress of the French’, a particularly loud and prolonged cheer rose from everyone present. After receiving a copy of the address, Louis Napoleon took his reply from a pocket and, after a pause for silence, read it ‘in a firm and distinct voice, though with a slightly foreign accent’:

Nothing could affect me more deeply than the sentiments towards the Empress and myself to which you ... have given expression on the part of the City of London; for the City of London represents the available resources which a world-wide commerce affords both for civilization and for war. Flattering as are your praises I accept them, because they are addressed much more to France than to myself; they are addressed to a nation whose interests are today everywhere identical with your own; they are addressed to an army and navy united to yours by an heroic companionship in danger and in glory; they are addressed to the policy of the two Governments, which is based on faith, on moderation, and on justice. For myself, I have retained on the throne the same sentiments of sympathy and esteem for the English people that I professed as an exile while I enjoyed here the hospitality of your Queen; and if I have acted in accordance with my convictions, it is that the interests of the nation which has chosen me, no less than that of universal civilization, has made it a duty.

Indeed England and France are naturally united on all the great questions of politics and of human progress that agitate the world ... I see in the moral as in the political world for our two nations but one course and one end. It is, then, only by unworthy considerations and pitiful rivalries that our union could be severed ... You are right in interpreting my presence among you as a fresh and convincing proof of my energetic co-operation in the prosecution of the war, if we fail in obtaining an honourable peace. Should we so fail, although our difficulties may be great, we may surely count on a successful result; for not only are our soldiers and sailors of tried valour ... [but also] they are in the van of all generous and enlightened ideas. The eyes of all who suffer instinctively turn to the West. Thus our two nations are even more powerful from the opinions they represent than by the armies and fleets they have at their command. I am deeply grateful to your Queen for affording me this solemn opportunity of expressing to you my own sentiments and those of France, of which I am the interpreter ... We shall take back with us to France the lasting impression, made on minds thoroughly able to appreciate it, of the imposing spectacle which England presents, where virtue on the throne directs the destinies of a country under the empire of a liberty without danger to its grandeur.

‘The address of the City good – Emperor’s reply admirable’, was the laconic summary of the duke of Cambridge.<sup>51</sup> The speech was certainly well received, and Louis Napoleon had managed to strike exactly the chord the Corporation and its guests wanted to hear.

The reply marked the end of the welcoming ceremony, and the entire party processed to the Council Chamber for lunch, past the ligneous wardship of Gog and Magog. Louis Napoleon and Eugénie were placed at one end of the great table with Sir Francis and Lady Moon *vis-à-vis*. On Louis Napoleon’s right sat the duke of Cambridge and the members of the Cabinet; on Eugénie’s left sat Walewski and the *corps diplomatique*.

The banquet was as sumptuous as the City could make it, with John and Thomas Staples, owners of the Albion tavern on Aldersgate Street, providing the fare and arrangement. This included lace napkins embroidered with imperial and City arms and doilies of imperial green velvet fringed with gold and with golden bees surrounding the imperial crown. Dessert plates had been specially manufactured at Coalbrookdale Potteries within the week, a beautiful turquoise glazed on porcelain with the classic imperial cipher in the centre.

The six-course menu was eclectic and included some unusual dishes, among them *bisque d’écrevisse* and *potage de nids d’oiseaux Chinois*. The best wines available in London were served, including hock, malvoisie, champagne, and amontillado, drunk

from crystal glasses cut with the appropriate imperial emblems. A cask of sherry from 1746 – described as ‘matchless’ – was the last part of a large quantity originally sold to Napoleon for the sum of £600 a barrel; but whether Louis Napoleon knew this was not recorded. In any event, he was observed to eat and drink somewhat frugally, but Eugénie ‘took her glass of wine gracefully and with moderate freedom’.<sup>52</sup>

After the meal, Louis Napoleon received the freedom of the City of London from Sir Francis Moon while the finishing touches to a surprise were being made ready for him in the corridor between the Council Chamber and the Great Hall. Portraits of the Bonaparte family had been borrowed from a valuable private collection – estimated at 1,000,000 francs – and hung up on the walls, forming a sort of Napoleonic *gantlope*. They included Mme Mère, Joseph, Jérôme, Hortense, and, of course, Napoleon. Louis Napoleon was surprised and moved by this peculiar, but not improper and certainly original, gesture. He examined all the paintings carefully, but most especially the one of his mother.

As they left the Guildhall, with a flourish of trumpets and led by the Horse Guards, *Partant pour la Syrie* was played as Louis Napoleon and Eugénie entered their coach, escorted by a squadron of Life Guards. The route back was the same until the end of the Strand where they turned right into Duncannon Street and then on to Pall Mall East. The carriage then drove up Lower Regent Street along Piccadilly and finally to Hyde Park and the French Embassy in Albert Gate for a meeting with his diplomatic staff.

Walewski had wanted this meeting to take place on the previous Tuesday but Louis Napoleon, reluctant to insult his hosts by breaking off his stay at Windsor for such a trivial reason, had insisted on the later schedule, demonstrating that he had more diplomatic skills than his professional diplomats. While the Comtesse Walewska, an Italo-Pole whom Walewski had married after his break with Rachel, entertained Eugénie and Lady Malmesbury, Louis Napoleon sat with Lord Malmesbury and the diplomatic staff to discuss the *entente cordiale*. They left at 5:30 and arrived at Buckingham Palace at 6:15.

\* \* \*

The state visit included an evening at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, for a command performance of Beethoven’s only opera, *Fidelio*.

But this was to be no ordinary operatic event such as Louis Napoleon had been used to seeing as an exile. Frederick Gye, director since 1851, had been given substantial funds to redecorate the entire theatre, turning it into ‘one of the most splendid scenes ever witnessed’ there.<sup>53</sup> However, although Gye had been given plenty of money, he did not have much time since Rossini’s comic-opera *Le Comte Ory*, which should have opened the season two weeks earlier, had been postponed until Tuesday and no work could be done beforehand. Nevertheless, as soon as it finished he got underway and succeeded in performing a minor miracle under the circumstances. The Royal Box was decorated with white calico hangings, satin braid, and gold filigree, and the theatre was cleaned, repainted, festooned with arranged flowers and laurel wreaths bearing the initials of Louis Napoleon, Eugénie, Victoria, and Albert. Large mirrors were placed strategically in the entrance lobby and halls to exaggerate the effect of the complex floral arrangements, and decorative busts were bought. Statuettes of the imperial and royal couples were placed *ensemble* in a conspicuous location to give the impression of *bonhommie*, a figurative representation of what by then was a reality.

When the party left Buckingham Palace, the illuminations that had been glimpsed earlier now came into their own in the finest display of colour and light London had ever seen, or was ever to see again. Every shop along the arranged route had made an effort to decorate itself and the street with gas and oil lamps, flowers, hangings, and banners. The Senior United Service Club was topped by a large Brunswick Crown above the initials of the imperial couple, while the Army & Navy Club displayed a vast star with the burning inscription *Unitate Fortior* surrounding it, with crossed swords and an anchor in the centre, the whole dwarfed by the words 'Victoria welcomes Napoleon'. Several hundred establishments from cutlers (95 the Strand), perfumeries (17 Cockspur Street), card-makers (20 Piccadilly), booksellers (Mitchell's of Bond Street), wine-merchants (Blockey's of Jermyn Street), and furniture makers (17 Coventry Street), all used displays based on the illuminated star (representing the Garter) with the initials 'N' and 'E' in laurel wreaths. The Egyptian Hall assembled five hundred Turkish and French lanterns across the entire frontage, while the Drury Lane Theatre erected a star that reached from the street up to the roof.

Some of the places Louis Napoleon had known went to particular lengths to let him know how they felt. Joshua Hartley, the bootmaker at 11 King Street where Louis Napoleon had bought all his footwear as an exile, had an imperial crown above the usual initials in variegated jets, even though Louis Napoleon would not see them. Henry Poole, his tailor, had erected 'A gorgeous display, consisting of a stupendous Imperial eagle 20 feet in height, between the initials 'N : E' surmounted by an Imperial crown; the whole forming no less than 12,700 brilliant gas jets, and surmounted with splendid flags, consisting of the Imperial standard and two national flags of France and England'.<sup>54</sup> Victoria wrote that she had never seen 'such enormous crowds at night – all in highest good humour. We literally drove through a sea of human beings, cheering and pressing the carriage. The streets were beautifully illuminated'.<sup>55</sup>

The party arrived at 9:45 during the interval between the first two acts. *The Times* (20 April):

A general movement among the audience, and the words 'the Queen', 'the Emperor' ... announced the arrival of our Sovereign and her great ally. Her Majesty entered the State Box, with the Emperor Louis Napoleon, and the Empress Eugénie with his Royal Highness Prince Albert. Mr Costa then waving his baton, *Partant pour la Syrie* was struck up, and the acclamations of the audience were graciously responded to by repeated obeisances. The French national air was succeeded by our own anthem, in which Madame Bosio sang the first verse, and all the company of the Royal Italian Opera, except those engaged in the performance of *Fidelio*, took part. The *entente cordiale* thus harmoniously established, the cheers and acclamations were renewed ... and the *Leonora* overture, magnificently played by the orchestra, obtained at least some degree of consideration for the music of Beethoven.

Albert sat on the left, with Eugénie on his right; beside her sat Victoria, with Louis Napoleon on her right. Both women wore modest tiaras while Louis Napoleon and Albert each wore their Star and Garter. The suite of twelve – seven men and five women – took their seats behind them, while two guards stood to attention in front of the box. The performance was public, but only the wealthiest were able to attend: Sir Francis Moon was charged eighty guineas for his box, while an ordinary stall cost fifty guineas. Standing room was available on the edges of the stage at three or four pounds.

The once universal habit of arriving late at musical performances was unacceptable in Paris, which had led the 'listening revolution', but it was still common in London. *The Times* was right to sneer, as the audience – who had of course heard the overture in its proper place – had to listen to it a second time for the benefit of the late comers.

But the artistic quality of the evening was high. The dramatic soprano Jenny Ney, in her English *début*, sang the role of Leonora, with Fanny Marai-Conti as Marzelline, the German bass Karl Formes as Rocco, the French bass Joseph Tagliafico as Pizarro, the bass Entimio Polonini as the Minister, Giuseppe Lucchesi as Fritz, and the Italian tenor Enrico Tamberlik as Fernando. Michael Costa, the founder of the company, took the baton.

The choice of *Fidelio* was curious, although it had been only recently that the work – in its reduced 1814 version – had gained popularity in England. Bouilly's novel *Léonore ou l'amour conjugal* was the story of the rescue of a political prisoner, Florestan, from a Spanish dungeon in which he had been incarcerated, alone and in complete darkness, with no apparent hope of rescue, by Don Pizarro. This gloomy prison was the only stage set for much of the opera. Moreover, the story had been based on a true incident in the Bastille during the Great Revolution. Since Louis Napoleon had spent six years in Ham, a more sensitive choice might have been made. *The Times* (20 April) agreed:

It was generally thought that *Fidelio* ... was hardly the kind of opera to select for so joyful and propitious an occasion ... Not so ... The last *finale* had been left out of the calculation. Music more harmonious, more intensely expressive of unbounded joy, was never composed. From the duet of Leonora and Florestan, in the prison scene, to the triumphant climax, *Fidelio* presents one uninterrupted flood of sunshine.<sup>56</sup>

Musically, this was perhaps true, and certainly the story has a 'happy ending'. But *The Times* had missed the point, and it was more likely that the overall grimness of the opera was what Louis Napoleon would have noticed rather than the *finale*, and perhaps he spent much of the time wondering whether the entire audience was secretly making the association between the story and his recent personal history. However, as the party left the theatre – to *Partant pour la Syrie* and *God Save the Queen* played by Her Majesty's Guards<sup>57</sup> – he managed to bow to everybody with something approaching a smile.

\* \* \*

Friday April 20 was Louis Napoleon's birthday. For Catholics it was, of course, not the *jour de naissance* but the *fête du nom* that was celebrated. Queen Victoria was aware of this, but nevertheless decided that the day must be marked in some way. 'Though not fêted, or taken any public notice of, we felt we could not do otherwise than take private notice of it',<sup>58</sup> and she gave him a little pencil-case as a souvenir.

On this, the last full day, Victoria and Albert had arranged to show their guests the Crystal Palace of 1851, by then re-erected in a much-enlarged (and greatly criticized) version at Sydenham Park in Bromley. 'Why', asked *The Times* (21 April) 'should the great structure ... be marked out for Imperial curiosity in preference to the British Museum and other institutions supported out of the revenue of the country?' But the paper, posing the question rhetorically, also answered it by recognizing that no other building in England better epitomized English genius and entrepreneurial determination. The British Museum may have been the best of its kind in the world, but it was essentially the record of other cultures. Louis Napoleon had not crossed the Channel to see Carolingian swords, *ancien régime* jewellery, or even Merovingian golden bees, but to be infused with the contemporary value of his ally.

Nine open carriages and an escort of carbineers left Buckingham Palace at 11:20. The Walewskis, Cowley, Vaillant, Bassano, Leiningen, and their various attendants

accompanied the royal and imperial couples in a *cortège* of thirty-three persons. The Crystal Palace was reached at noon, where Samuel Laing, chairman of the Crystal Palace Company, Sir Joseph Paxton, and Sir Charles Fox, received them. Louis Napoleon offered his arm to Victoria, Albert his to Eugénie, and they began their tour, accompanied at a short distance by other company directors leading the rest of the party.

The light streaming into the central nave astonished the French as they were shown the Pompeian House – a copy of one recently excavated at Pompeii – fitted out for the occasion with vases, statuettes, and running water with goldfish. The French Court contained some fine Sèvres vases, but otherwise caused *The Times* to remark that ‘other specimens of French manufacture exhibited here are for the most part of a very inferior character, and it is to be hoped that this fact brought within the personal observation of the Emperor may induce our neighbours to send to the Palace a more worthy representation of their industry than it at present possesses’.

A surprise reunion occurred when after this Louis Napoleon met Sir William Cavendish, the liberal benefactor of industrial and scientific enterprises who was at the Palace overseeing his collection of unusual plants. Cavendish was another man Louis Napoleon had met during his fifth visit, and the two friends talked for a while before the tour was allowed to continue. From the centre of the Palace the party was then deliberately led out onto a temporary balcony erected next to the central transept overlooking the Terrace-gardens for a surprise ‘which will not readily be effaced from the minds of those who witnessed it’:

Upwards of 20,000 well-dressed people were assembled in one great mass upon the terrace ... cheer after cheer rose from them with a volume and fervour which were quite overwhelming. The august personages who were the objects of this demonstration seemed greatly moved. Even the Emperor, impossible as he is in manner, was evidently excited.

This was followed by the obligatory performance of *Partant pour la Syrie* played by a military band.

But not everything went according to plan. Joseph Paxton’s fountains were dry due to a burst main: ‘Sir J. Paxton was inconsolable at this disappointment, and began to fear that the mischief done could not be remedied before the departure of the illustrious visitors’. Neither Louis Napoleon nor Victoria was worried by this hiccough, and they reluctantly re-entered the Palace to see the series of architectural halls designed to suggest the national flavours of various cultures and epochs, based on those that had astonished the world in 1851.

Some notable scholars had been assigned to the tour. Owen Jones, the architect and ornamental designer who had been the superintendent of the Great Exhibition, lectured the party on the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Moorish courts. Sir Matthew Wyatt, the architect and writer on art who had helped Owen on the Exhibition, and who was now surveyor to the Honourable East India Company, lectured on the Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance sections.

Lunch was served in the picture-gallery, a temporary saloon erected next to the Royal apartments, transformed for the occasion into a banqueting hall. When lunch was almost finished ticket holders were admitted into the Palace, and nearly 22,000 streamed into the nave in time for the end of lunch so they could cheer the party as it made its way back down to the balcony, all carefully arranged so that women would be at the front and men behind. When the party reached the balcony for one final look across the Kentish landscape, the fountains erupted in a display of controlled aqueous

ingenuity described as having ‘conspicuous superiority over anything of the kind in other countries’.

After examining the unique hydraulic system in the pumping room, the party re-entered the Palace and arranged itself on a raised platform in the central transept to listen to some band music and constant cheering and applause before leaving. The visit had been a great triumph for both Victoria and the Crystal Palace Company that had endured such criticism for bothering to retain the structure at all: ‘Its national character is now established by this visit, and it only rests with the people to support it as it deserves’.

The coaches arrived at Buckingham Palace at 4:10, and at six o’clock a second Council of War was held, this time with Victoria present:

I seated myself in the sofa next to the Emperor ... Lord Panmure and Lord Palmerston on the sofa opposite, Lord Clarendon on a chair near us. It was one of the most interesting things I was ever present at, and which I would not have missed for the world. The result of the whole was the paper ... which was signed next morning by our respective War Ministers ... The Emperor made his observations in that very calm, quiet way, which has such a wonderful effect on everyone. I sat watching his face and his peculiar eye, whilst he was calculating the numbers on paper, which certainly are overwhelming, and I think no Russian Army will be able to withstand.<sup>59</sup>

After an hour and a half, Victoria left the meeting to dress for dinner, but the Council did not end until 8 o’clock for dinner when talk was of War and England:

The Emperor talked of the Council, and I said I was convinced that without his presence here we should never have come to an agreement of such importance. He repeated his intention of going to the Crimea, and was only waiting for decisive news from Vienna. I once more expressed my fear of his departure ... and begged he would not unnecessarily expose himself, to which he replied that he certainly would not ... The Emperor’s love for England is very great: ‘l’Angleterre, c’est admirable; il faut me contenir devant les Français,’ but there was such a difference between us; ‘il y a une telle présomption’, which is true, that their revolution had come later than ours, but yet they were a hundred years behind us!<sup>60</sup>

After dinner, the queen gave a large private concert in the White Drawing-Room – the Saloon, Picture Gallery, Green Drawing-Room, Royal Closet, and Ballroom were also opened up for the occasion – which did not end until after midnight. It was a cultural and social triumph to which almost five hundred persons of great distinction had been invited. Once again, as at the Guildhall and for similar reasons of international diplomacy, almost the entire *corps diplomatique* in London was present, as well as archbishops Sumner of Canterbury and Musgrave of York. The more unusual guests included the young ex-Siekh Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, younger brother of the murdered maharajah of Lahore, and now a Christian, and the Afghan leader Gholam Mohammed with his son, both deposed princes who were on an extended visit to England.

The two-part concert was interesting for a particular reason. The music, mainly operatic arias by Rossini and Mozart, were sung by some of the singers Louis Napoleon had heard at Covent Garden the day before as well as the soprano Clara Novello. But also present and performing was the mezzo-soprano, pianist, and composer Pauline Viardot.

Born in Paris of a Spanish musician, she had married Louis Viardot, a journalist and translator of *Don Quixote* who was a committed republican who never forgave Louis Napoleon his *coup d’état* and spent the rest of his long life opposing it. Pauline, although never as virulent on this issue as her husband, had a vast number of ‘unsuitable’ artistic and intellectual admirers who were at odds with the Second

Empire: Arie Scheffer, who for a long time after the *coup d'état* was unable to paint on account of it; Ivan Turgenev, who exploded at every mention of Louis Napoleon's name; and George Sand. Moreover, Pauline was a friend of active political opponents such as Jules Simon and Henri Martin, and also the revolutionists Mikhail Bakunin, Aleksandr Herzen, Herman Müller-Strubing, and Daniele Manin, ex-president of the Venetian Republic of 1848. After the *coup d'état*, her house was searched and letters written to Louis Viardot by Manin and the Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth were confiscated, although no arrests were made and Pauline herself was not implicated in any of them.

She sung in five of the eleven offerings that night, including a vocal trio written by her father in which she was joined by Angiolina Bosio and the mezzo-soprano Constance Nantier-Didiée. Possibly this performance in front of Louis Napoleon contributed to the decay of a difficult marriage. Louis Napoleon, aware of the circumstance surrounding the singer, remained tactfully silent in so far as he refrained from mentioning any of these details, which the organizers would not have known. But, as Queen Victoria noted, for once he was not generally silent when he perhaps ought to have been:

During the concert he conversed with me on several important subjects, and he was altogether in such a *causant* mood, that I think he would have been inclined, had there been more time, to converse upon many even more delicate subjects, upon which I would certainly have been glad for him to give his reasons. Speaking of M. Van de Weyer, who is a great and old friend of his, he said he could not understand how [he] could have imagined he meant to take possession of Belgium! That also 'on croyait que je voulais attaquer l'Angleterre, mais, mon Dieu! Comment pouvait-on y croire? Il n'y avait pas le moindre prétexte!' I answered that certainly people had had this idea, and that in England people sometimes had very extraordinary notions, which they believed in with the greatest pertinacity. In 1838, when he was staying at Beaudesert, Lady Anglesey told him 'que le roi Louis-Philippe voulait faire une descente sur l'Angleterre', that he had told her, 'C'est absurde', but she had still maintained it.<sup>61</sup>

Whether Louis Napoleon deliberately talked during Viardot's performance in a manner already unacceptable in Paris merely to annoy her cannot be known, although this would have been out of character. In any event, his behaviour would have confirmed Pauline in her opinion that all the Bonapartes were Philistines.

Although the exact time of Louis Napoleon's departure from England had not been made public, many people had nevertheless gathered along the route to Bricklayer's Arms Station with some having camped out since dawn. As well as flags, flowers, and imperial banners, the band of the Coldstream Guards were ready to play *Partant pour la Syrie* as the visitors emerged from their carriage, which they did at 10:30 accompanied by Prince Albert and the duke of Cambridge. In charge of a small police escort was Sir Richard Mayne.

Louis Napoleon and Eugénie were dressed exactly as on the day of their arrival except that Louis Napoleon proudly wore his Order of the Garter (the Star) on his tunic and Eugénie a black lace veil. One thousand 'society' people had bought tickets to fill the station, which had of course been closed for ordinary traffic. Sir Francis Moon and Haussmann's party had arrived half an hour beforehand along with most of the ticket holders. As Albert and the duke of Cambridge led the couple to the train, there followed the usual tremendous cheering as well as waving of hats and handkerchiefs. The train did not pull out of the station until 10:50, leaving some minutes for final farewells between the guests and their admirers; as the train left, their hats and handkerchiefs flew up into the air.

People again anticipated the brief stop at Tunbridge and all the platforms of the station were filled by cheering people, some of whom again approached the glass windows to get a better look at the occupants. The train arrived at Dover shortly after one o'clock where it was met by Henry Rich, Liberal member for Richmond in Yorkshire and chairman of the South Eastern Railway Company. There was a moment for a brief speech. 'Everything has been excellent', Louis Napoleon announced. 'I regret only one thing – that is, that you [nodding to Rich] have conveyed me too quickly out of England'.<sup>62</sup>

Louis Napoleon had not been very happy with the performance of the *Pélican*, and at his request the Blackwall-made paddle steamers *Empress* and *Queen*, of the Royal Mail Dover and Calais Company – which had accompanied him on his arrival – conveyed him and the rest of the party back to France. Many hundreds of cheering voices were once again punctuated by the great guns of Dover castle as at 1:30 the paddles began to turn and the *Empress* and *Queen* moved out of the harbour, Louis Napoleon with his hat under his arm and saluting and Eugénie waving a white handkerchief. As a local reporter put it: 'By the Emperor's command, the vessels lingered as they left the English shore, and the cheers ... could for a long time be heard wafting to him, in sounds becoming every moment fainter and fainter, the sweet but sad music of farewell'.<sup>63</sup>

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The plan to dissuade Louis Napoleon from taking personal command of the armies in the Crimea had not been immediately successful. However, the ambition to instil into both the elite and popular psyche the reality of the *entente cordiale* had been more than satisfactorily achieved. Among the political animals of the day Louis Napoleon had made no enemies, while at the same time he made many friends. Moreover, some – like Albert and Victoria themselves – who had been to a certain extent suspicious beforehand, had for the time being learned to change their opinion of him.

Queen Victoria in fact utterly succumbed to Louis Napoleon's mystical charm and element of rakish Romanticism, qualities to which she was particularly sensitive in unusual *gallants* such as Melbourne and Disraeli. She was completely distraught at Louis Napoleon's departure: 'Thus this visit, this great event, has passed like everything does, alas!'<sup>64</sup> she wrote in her journal shortly after Louis Napoleon left London, with that strong element of manic-depressive melancholia to which she was prone all her life. But, a few days later, she wrote to her uncle in a different frame of mind: 'Our great visit is past, like a brilliant and most successful dream, but I think the effect on the visitors will be a good and lasting one; they saw in our reception, and in that of the whole Nation, nothing put on, but a warm, hearty welcome to a faithful and steady ally'.<sup>65</sup>

Greville summed up the visit in his usual candid manner:

The visit of the Emperor has been one continued ovation, and the success of it complete. None of the Sovereigns who have been here before have ever been received with such magnificence by the Court or by such curiosity and delight by the people. Wherever and whenever they have appeared, they have been greeted by enormous multitudes and prodigious acclamations. The Queen is exceedingly pleased with both of them ... He has done his best to please her, talked to her a great deal, amused her, and has completely succeeded. Everybody is struck with his mean and diminutive figure and vulgar appearance, but his manners are good and not undignified ... The fineness of the weather brought out the whole population of London, as usual kept in excellent order by a few policemen, and in perfect good humour. It was a beautiful sight ... the streets lit by gas and the houses illuminated and light as day ... I am glad the success of the visit has been so great, and the contentment of all the parties

concerned so complete, but it is well that all will be over tomorrow, for such excitement and enthusiasm could not last much longer, and the inconvenience of being beset by crowds, and the streets obstructed, is getting tiresome.<sup>66</sup>

The royal children had also been deeply affected by the visit, in particular the teenage Princess Royal who developed an intense crush on Eugénie, and the Prince of Wales who would soon be smitten by all things French and remain so to the end of his life. According to the fashion of the time, they all wept profusely as a group when the imperial visitors left Buckingham Palace, creating a scene that was widely reported, and which caused some considerable differences of opinion. Disraeli, who lived on the corner of Grosvenor Gate on the other side of Green Park, witnessed the ‘immense embracing ... and many tears. When the carriage door was at length closed, and all seemed over, the Emperor re-opened it himself, jumped out, pressed Victoria to his heart, and kissed her, on each cheek, with streaming eyes. What do you think of that?’<sup>67</sup> Not a great deal had Disraeli been writing to Carlyle, who had not witnessed it:

We have got done with our Emperor. Thank Heaven, he took himself away before the week ended. Never was such a blaze of enthusiastic reception, etc., says rumour, which I for my own share cannot confirm or decisively contradict. Royal children all weeping when the *soi-disant* august pair took themselves away again – *à la bonne heure!*<sup>68</sup>

Although open dissent was not widespread it was certainly there, although the Press naturally made light of it. Greville’s ‘few policemen’ was a misleading statement to say the least of it. Sir Richard Mayne and Daniel Harvey, the Radical politician, founder of the *Sunday Times*, and commissioner of the City of London police, had gone to great lengths to ensure not only that no personal harm should come to Louis Napoleon but also that both he and the press should be given the right impression.

There were in fact many hundreds of policemen positioned throughout the routes, deliberately conspicuous in their blue uniforms and insignia, spaced at six-yard intervals. No other carriages or horses were allowed on any of the routes, nobody could follow the procession – even at a distance – and nobody was allowed within the police lines. Mayne’s instructions were comprehensive and capable of considerable interpretation: ‘The superintendents will take special care that no obstruction take place on the line of Route, and the utmost vigilance is to be used to prevent any disorder or breach of the peace’. ‘The police will take immediate steps to remove persons wherever it becomes necessary for the general safety’.<sup>69</sup> Many members of the militia had volunteered to give their support and a number of imperial *mouchards* had arrived to observe known foreigners and their activities. In addition, Guards of Honour from both regiments of Life Guards had been assigned as escorts to and from Windsor, charged with the task of ensuring Louis Napoleon’s personal safety.<sup>70</sup>

There were two points of particular personal interest for Louis Napoleon, though it is unlikely that he was aware of either. Major Francis Martyn excused himself from forming a part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards and he did not appear anywhere during the state visit. Although the plain clothes detectives at the Crystal Palace were under the direction of Detective-Inspector Stephen Thornton, overall control had gone to Nicholas Pearce, now a superintendent and the man who of course had arrested Louis Napoleon on Wimbledon Common twenty-five years earlier.

Many leading foreign activists, such as Mazzini and Ledru-Rollin, left London and travelled north. They had not been asked to leave – nor would they necessarily have attempted to interfere had they stayed – but they did so because they had no wish to be implicated in anything that might happen. This suggested either that there was real

danger for Louis Napoleon and they had known it or that there was at least a widespread conviction of this. At any rate, Victoria's figurative 'whole Nation' did not include thousands who kept quiet during the visit. It is astonishing though that Carlyle, living in Chelsea, could think he could alter the facts by misrepresenting them for the future. Nevertheless, shortly before Louis Napoleon's departure for France, he wrote:

Louis Napoleon has not been shot hitherto. That is the best that can be said. He gathers, they say, great crowds about him, but his reception from the hip-hip-hurrahing classes is not warm at all. On Monday, just before they arrived, I came (in omnibus) down Piccadilly. Two thin and thinnest rows of the most abject-looking human wretches I had ever seen or dreamt of – lame, crock-backed, dwarfish, dirty-shirted, with the air of pick-pockets and city jackals, not a gent hardly among them, much less any vestige of a gentleman – were drawn up from St James's Street to Hyde Park Corner to receive the august pair. I looked at them with a shuddering thankfulness that they were not drawn up to receive me.<sup>71</sup>

All very amusing no doubt, but Carlyle's report was so contrary to the overwhelming evidence of the press and every other independent observer that he can only have been deliberately distorting the facts to suit his own Presbyterian misanthropy.

Carlyle's disciple and future biographer, the historian James Froude, took on his absurd mantle after his death. When introducing Carlyle's letter, he wrote:

In this April [1855] came the still more sinister phenomenon of the visit to England of the French Emperor. On this point, if on no other, he was at one with the majority of his countrymen. Outside the privileged circles who wanted order preserved, and security to property, and safe enjoyment of idle luxury, Louis Napoleon had no friends among us. But the times were hard, and we looked on, swallowing down our disgust as best we could, while the Man of December was entertained at Windsor. It was said ... he was received in London by enthusiastic crowds. That was not Carlyle's impression from what he himself saw.<sup>72</sup>

But even this piece of republican *andium theologicum* was not Froude's worst assault on reason. In deferring to his master's well known contempt of the 'hip-hip-hurrahing' class, Froude had employed a version of Henry of Huntingdon's celebrated medieval truth table *Et ipse ego oculis meis inspexit* – 'I have seen it with my own eyes'. But this often proved only that some people saw what they wanted to see, and instead vindicated a far better Russian maxim: 'he lies like someone who was there'. Carlyle stated that he had passed through London on the day of Louis Napoleon's visit 'just before' the imperial party actually arrived. Since the route had only that morning been made public, 'just before' may have meant that Louis Napoleon was still on the train, in Dover, or even crossing the Channel. Obviously, all those who, for whatever reason, were already in the streets of London would be the first to appear at the scene and so of course were the ones observed by Carlyle – if indeed he had been out of his house at all.

Greville had certainly been out and about on that day, and also 'just before' Louis Napoleon arrived in London: 'I went out "with all the gazing town" to see ... the entry of the Emperor ... into London. The day was magnificent, the crowd prodigious, the reception not very clamorous, but cordial and respectful. A fine sight for them to see such vast multitudes, so orderly and so prosperous.'<sup>73</sup> Richard Cobden was in London for the parliamentary session in which he would lambaste the Ministry in June over the Crimean War: 'The Emperor of the French has just passed, and from all I can hear of those who saw the procession he was received with uproarious cheers by the people. The streets and houses and every available spot throughout the line of march were crowded with spectators'.<sup>74</sup> Charles Dickens appeared at the Stratton

Street home of the philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts shortly before Louis Napoleon was due to pass. Finding the house filled to capacity with her friends eager to see the procession, he left, subsequently explaining that he 'took fright' at the sight of her guests since he was 'Anti-Napoleonic'.<sup>75</sup>

*Punch*, although entering on an agreed policy of critical withdrawal during the *entente cordiale* and state visit, nevertheless inadvertently commented on the reception. In point of fact, *Punch* reserved its criticisms for the monolingual English and what it saw as their insult to Louis Napoleon by not knowing any French. The Corporation of London was mocked for addressing him in English and then inserting just one French word ('puissant') into the speech, while the public was criticized for proudly shouting 'Veeve Lumpharoar!' as Louis Napoleon passed. But this cut, by Leech, nevertheless showed a working boy forced to climb a lamp post due to the solid mass of 'lumpharoaring' heads on the street.

Certainly no single report should form the basis of any general view of the reception, but to believe that everyone had been lying *à la Russe* except Carlyle is simply absurd.

Some alleged examples of individual opposition were fabricated, such as the preposterous story provided by George Jacob Holyoake, the ex-Chartist and professional activist who had been the last person in England imprisoned for blasphemy. In 1855, Holyoake was editing the *Leader* and claimed that when Louis Napoleon's coach passed his offices at 147 Fleet Street (on his way to the Guildhall) the horses shied and the procession halted as a result of a large quantity of confetti let loose on him from high windows and rooftops. When Louis Napoleon leaned out to see what had caused the delay he saw the name 'Mazzini' that Holyoake had written in large red letters across his door and 'which was not reassuring for him'.<sup>76</sup> Holyoake, a pathological liar and weak-minded fantasist who spent most of his last years dreaming himself into world affairs with which he had no connection whatsoever, will be met with again in even more delusional circumstances.

Edward Truelove, a bookseller and publisher specializing in republican propaganda, was established at 240 The Strand, near Temple Bar, where he lived with his family. Victor Hugo, now in self-imposed exile on Jersey as the self-styled 'conscience of France', had had a pamphlet critical of the state visit, *England's Disgrace*, put out by a Radical group in Holborn. Truelove, who had known Hugo for some time and who had also distributed his vituperative denunciation of Louis Napoleon, *Napoléon le Petit*, in 1852, also distributed this pamphlet.

On Monday morning, just before Louis Napoleon's arrival, Truelove put a notice in front of his shop advertising Hugo's pamphlet for sale at the low price of one penny. But, before the imperial carriage arrived, bystanders removed the placard, pushed Truelove into his own shop, smashed some of his windows, and kept him a prisoner there until the procession passed. When the police were called, it was found that he had been about to distribute his own flyer opposing the state visit. Borrowing heavily from Hugo, it read:

England's Disgrace! The Red Day of Humiliation. Louis Napoleon, the murderer, the oath-breaker, the destroyer of the French and the Italian Republics, who bribed the soldiers to massacre peaceful citizens on the Boulevards, exiled the best men of France, and paved his way to power with the corpses of honest and inoffensive Men, Women, and Children, is coming to England. Englishmen, do your duty. The truth of every accusation is proved by the *Times*, *Chronicle*, and *Advertiser* of December '51 and January '52!<sup>77</sup>

In April 1853, Truelove had been in trouble for selling unstamped newspapers for Collett's *Potteries Free Press*, a small Radical printer, and he was now arrested under the Seditious Meetings acts (57 Geo. III c.19 & 60 Geo. III c.6) that enabled police to enter private premises and seize 'seditious, libellous, and blasphemous' publications. The phrase 'Englishmen, do your duty' may well have been an exhortation to assassination, though no doubt Truelove explained it differently. At any rate, he was not severely prosecuted. At the same time, Truelove published a mocking twelve-stanza song called *The Emperor and Empress's Visit to England!* whose chorus went:

The Emperor and Empress are coming so keen  
To visit Prince Al, and old England's Queen,  
The Emperor of France and his lady so gay  
Are coming to England – get out of the way.

Another bookseller, William Jeffs of 15 Burlington Arcade, specialized in French erotica and any material critical of the Second Empire; ironically, Louis Napoleon used to buy his French papers from him during the fifth visit. Jeffs was a friend of Eugène Forcade, who wrote the political column *Chronique de la quinzaine* for the *Revue des deux mondes* in which he led the criticism against Haussmann's policy of deficit finance. Forcade had stopped editing *La Patrie* in 1850 when it had become too sympathetic to Louis Napoleon. He was also cousin to Jean de Forcade la Roquette, an Orleanist who would serve as an opposition senator after 1861 and minister of agriculture, commerce, and public works from 1867 to 1869 at a time when Louis Napoleon no longer directly controlled the appointment of ministers. Just as Hugo used Truelove so Forcade was happy to use Jeffs as a channel for critical material that would have been difficult or impossible to promote in France until later relaxation in the law. Although Truelove and Jeffs were English, clearly much of the opposition to the state visit had been promoted from France.

If Victoria's 'whole Nation' remark was not quite true, Froude's estimation that Carlyle had been 'at one with the majority of his countrymen' was totally false.

\* \* \*

When Louis Napoleon sailed from Dover, it still appeared as though one of the objectives of the state visit had failed. Although the advice that he should abandon his projected command in the Crimea had been presented to him unanimously, it seemed to be no nearer to success than it had been before his arrival. On the day of departure, the duke of Cambridge could write: 'I think it is quite settled that he is to go shortly to the Crimea in the event of peace not being made, which is not probable'.<sup>78</sup> Two days after Louis Napoleon's return to Paris, Cowley wrote to Clarendon: 'I asked him when he intended to set out for the Crimea. He replied the first day of May'.<sup>79</sup> On that same day – Monday 23 April – *Le Constitutionnel* announced that the imperial camp equipage had already been sent off to Marseilles in preparation for him to take command in the field.

Louis Napoleon rarely reached a decision reactively – when he did he was invariably and disastrously wrong – but by a process of rational osmosis during which his immediate conviction would be publicly and staunchly held while being continually undermined by concealed better judgement. He would mull over the reasons for saying 'non' while maintaining 'oui' (or, of course, *vice-versa*), then suddenly announce 'non' to the relief of his frustrated advisors who had been

suggesting it from the outset. In this case, Louis Napoleon's 'non' came on 26 April, as Cowley informed Clarendon:

We have given up the Crimean Expedition ... The real reason I take to be that the Emperor has been alarmed at the state of France and what might happen in his absence. He has no confidence either in his uncle, or cousin, who would play him any trick, nor in the courage or devotion of his Ministers ... he cannot trust Drouyn with hands untied to conduct future negotiations with Austria, which may end in placing her for aught he knows in an understanding with Russia ... He is much cut up about it, for which one likes him the more.<sup>80</sup>

This key objection cited by Cowley was of course quite true. As early as 1852 Louis Napoleon had told Lord Holland in Paris that he would prefer to adopt the then Duc de Leuchtenberg as his son rather than allow the succession of the empire to devolve onto his family: 'The whole family of Bonaparte he loathes'.<sup>81</sup> Once again, Louis Napoleon found himself abandoned by the political experience of the nation. By putting personal ideology and pride before patriotic service, small-minded and short-sighted – but highly qualified – Legitimists, Orleanists, and Republicans who refused to serve him caused incalculable harm to come to their own country. Had there been a male heir in 1855, and had Eugénie been better qualified to act as regent, things may have been different; as it was, Louis Napoleon had little choice but to say his 'non' and return to the Tuileries. Although few doubted that Louis Napoleon had been essentially correct in his proposed revision of the Crimean campaign by placing it under the authority of one man – Burgoyne had seen this himself in the Spring of 1854 and said so – few believed that the emperor of the French should be the one to undertake the task.

Happily, Louis Napoleon had not needed to pay England a state visit in order to improve his already very favourable opinion of it: 'What a difference in your country where everything is lasting and solid',<sup>82</sup> he confessed to Cowley, again lamenting that France was capable only of revolution and not evolution along English lines. Although the *entente cordiale* consolidated by the state visit would be put under great pressure, its 'lasting and solid' achievement was that France and Britain would never again be at war with each other, achieved by also altering the English view of Louis Napoleon, as confessed by *The Illustrated London News* (28 April 1855):

One of the most remarkable phases of the history of the human mind is the change that has taken place in the opinion of mankind as to the true character of the present Emperor of the French. We have not on record a welcome so enthusiastic and universal given to any Sovereign by the people of this country. Yet, but a very few years ago he was regarded with, to say the least, aversion, by those who now receive him with acclamation. The explanation of this seeming contradiction is very simple. The English people are devoted to the constitutional and representative system of government; and they denounced Louis Napoleon because he destroyed an imitation of it in France. But they have since seen what use he has made of the power he gained so arbitrarily. They see, also, that the French themselves live under his rule with something more than contentment ... The people of England are now the sincere admirers and fast friends of the Emperor of the French ... a spirit clear and sagacious, a political probity unparalleled, a firm will, and a moderate temper: they saw that the more he developed himself the grander grew the proportions of his character; that a largeness of soul, and a mind emancipated from the pettiness of tradition and routine, fitted him to embody in himself ... the French nation.

This paper stopped short of openly implicating itself as one of those who had condemned Louis Napoleon in the past. It had never referred to the Second Republic as an 'imitation' of constitutional liberty in 1851 when it had happily denounced his 'usurpation' of it. This was as close to an admission of an error of judgement as the press in England would get.

Clarendon was more pragmatic:

Nothing ever answered better than the visit, and it may have important results, for as long as L.N. is on the throne of France and to all practical purposes is France, it cannot but be good that he should have kindly feelings towards the Sovereign and people of England, and I think the reception he met with will be flattering to the French people although the enemies of L.N. whose name is Legion must resent it, and intend to pay us off for it some of these days. The whole thing will form a curious page in the history of this country, and of this Court too if all that has passed behind the curtain could be faithfully written.<sup>83</sup>

Although not everything that passed ‘behind the curtain’ can ever be revealed for having disappeared, three addenda might be mentioned here. On Sunday, Walewski, following instructions Louis Napoleon had left at the French Embassy on Thursday afternoon, sent a fine little gift, with an accompanying letter, to William Payn at Dover, which reached him on Monday. It was a large gold snuff-box with the single letter ‘N’ in brilliants set into a frame of imperial purple, on either side of which appeared the arms of Paris and the City of London. In August, Louis Napoleon sent two diamond and pearl breast-pins to the firm of Staples of Aldersgate Street as a token of his appreciation for the dessert ware and wine glasses they had procured. On Christmas Day, he sent £400 to be distributed to nine hundred poor families in Windsor to the sum of six, eight, or ten shillings each, provided they were earning less than one pound a year, which of course many in England were.

Every so often Victoria wrote a memorandum – extensive, heavily emphasized, analytical, and highly personal – based on her experiences of particularly important events. At Buckingham Palace, on 2 May, she wrote one on the state visit:

That he [Louis Napoleon] is a very extraordinary man, with great qualities there can be no doubt – I might almost say a mysterious man. He is evidently possessed of indomitable courage, unflinching firmness of purpose, self-reliance, and great secrecy; to this should be added, a great reliance on what he calls his Star, and a belief in omens and incidents as connected with his future destiny, which is almost romantic ... he is endowed with wonderful self-control, great calmness, even gentleness, and with a power of fascination, the effect of which upon all those who become more intimately acquainted with him is most sensibly felt.

How far he is actuated by a strong moral sense of right and wrong is difficult to say. On the one hand, his attempts at Strasbourg and Boulogne, and this last after having given a solemn promise never to return or make a similar attempt – in which he openly called on the subjects of the then King of the French to follow him as the successor of Napoleon, the Coup d’État of December 1851, followed by great ... severity and the confiscation of the property of the unfortunate Orleans family, would lead one to believe that he is not. On the other hand, his kindness and gratitude towards all those, whether high or low, who have befriended him or stood by him through life, and his straightforward and steady conduct towards us throughout the very difficult and anxious contest in which we have been engaged for a year and a half, show that he is possessed of noble and right feelings.

My impression is, that in all these apparently inexcusable acts, he has invariably been guided by the belief that he is fulfilling a destiny which God has imposed upon him, and that, though cruel or harsh in themselves, they were necessary to obtain the result which he considered himself as chosen to carry out, and not acts of wanton cruelty or injustice; for it is impossible to know him and not to see that there is much that is truly amiable, kind, and honest in his character. Another remarkable and important feature in his composition is, that everything he says or expresses is the result of deep reflection and of settled purpose, and not merely des phrases de politesse, consequently when we read the words used in his speech made in the City, we may feel sure that he means what he says ... He may be, and probably is, well informed in the history of his own country, certainly fully so in that of the Empire, he having made it his special study to contemplate and reflect upon all the acts and designs of his great uncle. He is very well read in German literature, to which he seems to be very partial ... Louis Philippe was possessed of vast knowledge upon all and every subject, of immense experience in public affairs, and of great activity of mind; whereas the Emperor possesses greater judgement and much greater firmness of purpose, but no experience of public affairs ... considering that till six years ago he lived as a poor exile, for some years even in prison ... It is therefore the more astounding ... that he should show all

those powers of Government, and all that wonderful tact in his conduct and manners ... which many a King's son, nurtured in palaces and educated in the midst of affairs, never succeeds in attaining...

The great advantage to be derived from the permanent alliance of England and France, which is of such vital importance to both countries, by the Emperor's recent visit, I take to be this: that, with his peculiar character and views, which are very personal, a kind, unaffected, and hearty reception by us personally in our own family will make a lasting impression upon his mind ... It must likewise not be overlooked that this kindly feeling towards us ... must be increased when it is remembered that we are almost the only people in his own position with whom he has been able to be on any terms of intimacy ... He and the Empress are in a most isolated position, unable to trust the only relations who are near them in France, and surrounded by courtiers and servants who ... do not tell them the truth ... I would go still further, and think that it is in our power to keep him in the right course, and to protect him against the extreme flightiness, changeableness, and to a certain extent want of honesty on his own servants and nation...

These are a few of the many reflections caused by the observation and acquaintance with the character of this most extraordinary man, in whose fate not only the interests of this country, but the whole of Europe are intimately bound up. I shall be curious to see if, after the lapse of time, my opinion and estimate of it has been the right one.<sup>84</sup>

No doubt Victoria's estimate of Louis Napoleon would have been higher still if she had been steered clear of certain basic errors – not again her arithmetic, but the strange fact that as late as 1855 she still accepted the Orleanist *canard* of the *parôle*. It was also not clear how deeply Victoria analysed the *coup d'état* or the 'severity' of Louis Napoleon's subsequent actions. However, since most of her criticisms were founded on reported events that either never occurred or were misunderstood it may be fairly supposed that, even in the light of such a balanced eulogy, she had grossly underestimated him.

## NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter Eight

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- <sup>1</sup> QVL I ii 409.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 410.
- <sup>3</sup> *Wellesley* 17, Russell to Cowley 21 Jan. 1853.
- <sup>4</sup> *Aronson* 16.
- <sup>5</sup> QVL I iii 14-15.
- <sup>6</sup> *Cambridge* i 116-18.
- <sup>7</sup> *Wellesley* 50.
- <sup>8</sup> *Cambridge* i 121.
- <sup>9</sup> *Jerrold* iv 21.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 23-4, Albert to Victoria 5 Sep. 1854.
- <sup>11</sup> *Punch* XXV July-December 1853 115.
- <sup>12</sup> *Dalhousie* 291, Dalhousie to Sir George Couper 11 Mar. 1854.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 326, Dalhousie to Couper 22 Oct. 1854.
- <sup>14</sup> *Croker* 253, Croker to John Murray 17 Apr. 1854
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 261-2, Lonsdale to Croker 13 Nov. 1854.
- <sup>16</sup> QVL I iii 43.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 49.
- <sup>18</sup> QVL I iii 110, Victoria to Leopold 27 Feb. 1855.
- <sup>19</sup> *Aronson* 20.
- <sup>20</sup> *Russell* ii 193-4, Russell to Palmerston 22 Feb. 1855.
- <sup>21</sup> *Wellesley/Sencourt* 73, Cowley to Clarendon 28 Feb. 1855.
- <sup>22</sup> *Wellesley* 68.
- <sup>23</sup> *Fitzmaurice* i 104, Granville to Albert 16 Apr. 1855.
- <sup>24</sup> The public playing of *La Marseillaise* had been forbidden after 1852. In 1809, Hortense wrote the music of *Partant pour la Syrie* to a text by the Comte de Laborde, a politician and litterateur then auditor to the *Conseil d'État*. Musically, it is melancholy, but in four stanzas tells the happy story of the knight Dunois who gains glory and love during the First Crusade. Louis Napoleon allegedly 'hated' this anthem: 'Ah! My poor mother did not foresee what she would inflict on me, when she composed that tune!' [*Bicknell* 94].
- <sup>25</sup> *The Times* Tuesday 17 Apr. 1855.
- <sup>26</sup> The acclamation 'Kentish Fire' consists in rhythmic clapping of two slow beats followed by three rapid ones repeated as furiously as the occasion permits, accompanied by vocalizations on each beat. However, there are several variations of this obscure custom, including 'Aggy! Aggy! Aggy!' intoned rapidly by a 'leader' followed by 'Oi! Oi! Oi!' shouted more leisurely by the crowd.
- <sup>27</sup> *Malmesbury* ii 18.
- <sup>28</sup> *Guest* 206.
- <sup>29</sup> *Guest* 108.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 106-7.
- <sup>31</sup> *Stoney/Weltzein* 66-7.
- <sup>32</sup> *Guest* 109.
- <sup>33</sup> *Villiers* 254.
- <sup>34</sup> *Disraeli: M&B* iv 5.
- <sup>35</sup> *Lever* 342, Lady Palmerston to Mrs William Huskisson 11 Apr. 1855.
- <sup>36</sup> *Jagow* 171, Albert to Malmesbury 16 Jan. 1859.
- <sup>37</sup> *Cambridge* i 157.
- <sup>38</sup> QVL I iii 117, Victoria to Leopold 17 Apr. 1855.
- <sup>39</sup> *Villiers* 254.
- <sup>40</sup> *Jerrold* iv 68.
- <sup>41</sup> *Fitzmaurice* i 104, Granville to Albert 16 Apr. 1855.
- <sup>42</sup> *Corley* 163.
- <sup>43</sup> *Wellesley/Sencourt* 62.
- <sup>44</sup> *The Times* Thursday 19 Apr. 1855.
- <sup>45</sup> *Villiers* 254.
- <sup>46</sup> QVL I iii 117.
- <sup>47</sup> *Cambridge* ii 158.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ashwell and Wilberforce* ii 283, *journal* 18 Apr. 1855.
- <sup>49</sup> QVL I iii 125.
- <sup>50</sup> *Punch* XXVIII January-June 1855 134.

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<sup>51</sup> *Cambridge* i 158.

<sup>52</sup> *Guest* 125.

<sup>53</sup> *The Illustrated London News* 21 Apr. 1855.

<sup>54</sup> *The Times* Friday 20 Apr. 1855.

<sup>55</sup> *Rowell* 69.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> An additional verse had been added to *God Save the Queen* for the occasion:

Emperor and Empress  
O Lord, be pleased to bless;  
Look on this scene!  
And may we ever find,  
With bonds of peace entwin'd,  
England and France combined,  
God Save the Queen!

<sup>58</sup> *Guest* 128.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 132. The paper *Victoria* referred to was the official recognition of the continuation of the siege of Sevastopol, which had recommenced on 9 April. Louis Napoleon had been dissuaded from an early peace.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 132-3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 134.

<sup>62</sup> *The Times* Monday 23 Apr. 1855.

<sup>63</sup> *The Illustrated London News* 28 Apr. 1855.

<sup>64</sup> *Guest* 137.

<sup>65</sup> QVL I iii 117, *Victoria* to Leopold 19 Apr. 1855.

<sup>66</sup> *Greville* 20 Apr. 1855 (Wilson).

<sup>67</sup> *Disraeli: M&B* iv 5, *Disraeli* to Mrs Brydges Willyams 1 May 1855.

<sup>68</sup> *Froude* ii 190.

<sup>69</sup> *P.R.O.* MEPO 7/16 ff. 235, 241 *Commissioner's Orders April 1855*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* loc.cit.. The exact figures for the policing were as follows:

|                        | <u>Superintendents</u>  | <u>Inspectors</u> | <u>Sergeants</u> | <u>Constables</u> | <u>Mounted</u> | <u>Plain clothes</u> | <u>Reserves</u> |
|------------------------|---|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Arrival:</i>        | 10  | 16                | 61               | 640               | —              | —                    | —               |
| <i>Nine Elms:</i>      | 15  | 30                | 126              | 1530              | 22             | 30                   | 195             |
| <i>Guildhall:</i>      | under 100 police to the City barriers, thereafter City of London Police (figures unavailable) |                   |                  |                   |                |                      |                 |
| <i>Opera:</i>          | 8   | 15                | 28               | 650               | —              | 20                   | 108             |
| <i>Crystal Palace:</i> |   |                   |                  |                   |                |                      |                 |
| <i>Outside:</i>        | 13  | 31                | 126              | 1287              | —              | 50                   | —               |
| <i>Inside:</i>         | 7   | 16                | 63               | 630               | —              | —                    | —               |
| <i>Departure:</i>      | 12  | 19                | 57               | 920               | 10             | 26                   | 220             |

<sup>71</sup> *Froude* ii 189-90, Thomas Carlyle to John Carlyle 20 Apr. 1855.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 189.

<sup>73</sup> *Greville* 17 Apr. 1855 (Wilson).

<sup>74</sup> *Rogers* 113, Richard Cobden to Kate Cobden 16 Apr. 1855

<sup>75</sup> *Dickens* vii 594, Dickens to Burdett-Coutts 16 Apr. 1855.

<sup>76</sup> *Holyoake* ii 136.

<sup>77</sup> *Guest* 122.

<sup>78</sup> *Cambridge* i 158-9.

<sup>79</sup> *Wellesley/Sencourt* 80.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 81-2.

<sup>81</sup> *Ilchester II* 393.

<sup>82</sup> *Guest* 139.

<sup>83</sup> *Wellesley* 72, Clarendon to Cowley April 1855.

<sup>84</sup> QVL I iii 122-6.