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## Napoleon and Son

Cécile Bladier

Denise Blostein

Angela Cassata

Phil-Elleana Ficklin

Ryan Garrett

*See next page for additional authors*

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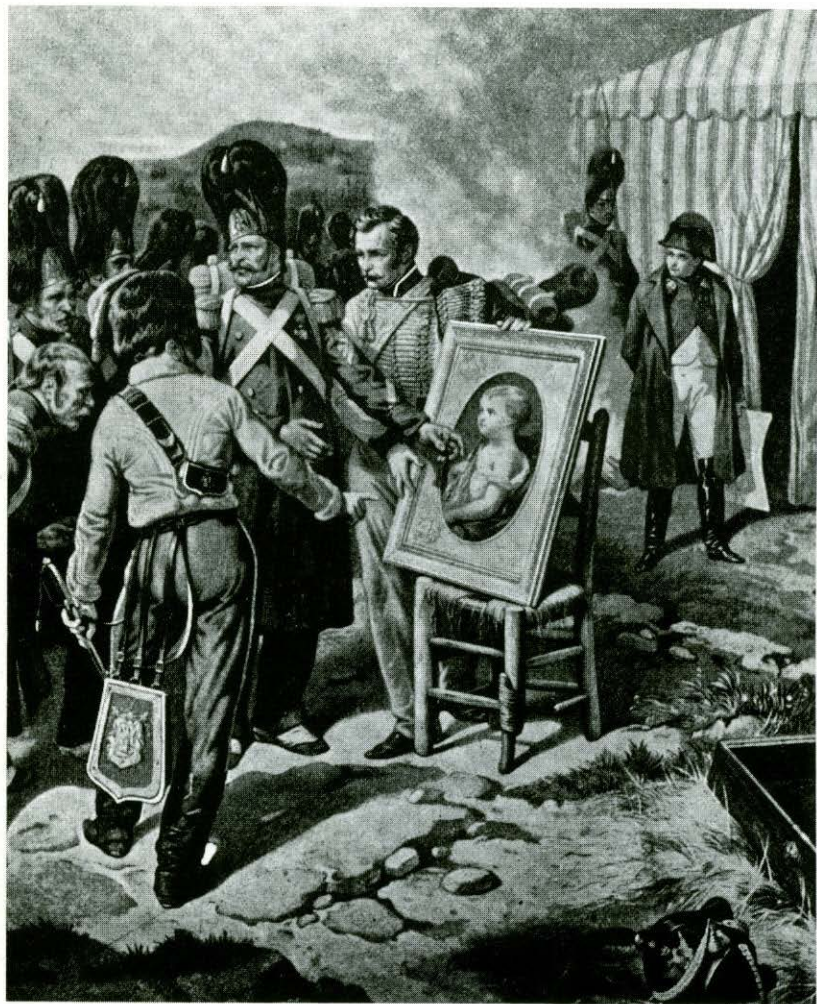
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**Author(s) of Translation**

Cécile Bladier, Denise Blostein, Angela Cassata, Phil-Elleana Ficklin, Ryan Garrett, Amanda Heflin, Lily Hoagland, Angela Maloney, Anna Milon, Maria Milutinovic, Dorpha Philidor, Anne-Marie Poincelet, Atsuko Sato, Ana Sekler, Ruth Steffen, Noel Straney, and Emily White

# Napoleon & Son



The Story of a Lost Legacy

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## The Story of a Lost Legacy

**Pascale-Anne Brault**  
Editor

**Anne-Marie Poincelet**  
Editorial Assistant

**Translators:**  
Cécile Bladier  
Denise Blostein  
Angela Cassata  
Phil-Elleana Ficklin  
Ryan Garrett  
Amanda Heflin  
Lily Hoagland  
Angela Maloney  
Anna Milon  
Maria Milutinovic  
Dorpha Philidor  
Anne-Marie Poincelet  
Atsuko Sato  
Ana Sekler  
Ruth Steffen  
Noel Straney  
Emily White



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

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Pascale-Anne Brault  
DePaul University  
Department of Modern Languages



**Above and on the cover:**

Cover illustration: Napoleon exhibiting a painting of his son to his soldiers. The scene shown occurred just before the battle of Borodino in Russia. The painting, by the portrait painter Gérard, had been sent to Napoleon by Marie-Louise.

Department of Special Collections and Archives  
DePaul University

The following pages contain a selection of texts by Napoleon, people from his entourage, and historians. They relate Napoleon's relationship with his son, Napoleon II, King of Rome, who was born on March 20, 1811 and died of tuberculosis on July 22, 1832, at the age of twenty-one. This intimate portrait of Napoleon provides a backdrop to the important historical events in the last ten years of the Emperor's life.

By 1810, the reorganization of Europe by Napoleon was far-reaching and seemed irreversible. Europe consisted of 130 French départements (from Hamburg to Rome, from Brest to Mayenz) and an Italian kingdom with Napoleon at its head. Having secured the alliance of the Kings of Saxony, Bavaria, and Denmark, Napoleon had essentially taken over Germany. Both Russia and Prussia had become the allies of France after their military defeat of 1807. Austria, defeated in 1805 and 1809, had been forced to side with France as well. England alone had been able to remain outside this drastic reconfiguration of Europe by Napoleon. But by 1815 and the Congress of Vienna, France would be reduced to its frontiers of 1792. Most of the events recounted in these pages take place during these fateful five years, 1810-1815.

Having divorced Joséphine de Beauharnais in 1809 because she could not provide him with an heir, Napoleon married Marie-Louise of Habsbourg, daughter of Francis I, Emperor of Austria, on April 1, 1810. Their union would result in the birth of a son, the King of Rome, just about a year later. Though this marriage did produce the desired heir to the throne, it did not fulfill its second objective, which was to secure a permanent alliance with Austria, which declared war on France on August 12, 1813 and joined the Allies in bringing about Napoleon's demise.

Though Napoleon was rarely separated from Marie-Louise during the first two years of their marriage, France's military engagements during the next three years would keep him frequently away from his wife and son. In May 1812, Napoleon had to leave his wife in Dresden in order to conduct the imperial army in the invasion of Russia. After the seven months that led to the French defeat, Napoleon returned to Paris for just a short while. On April 15, 1813, he left his family once again to fight the armies of the coalition (Austria, England, Prussia and Russia); this ended up in the defeat of Leipzig, on October 19.

On January 25, 1814, Napoleon set off again to try to stop the Allies' invasion of France. He was never to see his wife or son again after that date, though he had hoped that they would join him in exile at Elba. His short return to power during the hundred days of 1815 and his subsequent exile to St. Helena were also to be marked by the absence of his wife and son, then living in Austria. The young King of Rome, later renamed Duke of Reichstadt, was thus brought up by his maternal grandfather, Francis I, Emperor of Austria and a long-standing enemy of France.

The documents selected for this collection take us from the great hopes generated by the birth of Napoleon's son--the hopes that a direct heir would be able to carry on Napoleon's task and contribute to a dynasty--to Napoleon's demise and his desperate attempt at communicating his last wishes to his son. They range from official reports in the nation's newspaper, *Le Moniteur Universel*, to excerpts from the thirty-two volumes of the *Correspondence of Napoleon I* and the 318 letters written by Napoleon to Marie-Louise from 1810 to 1814, to selections from the historical memoirs of a former secretary



of Napoleon, M. Le Baron Méneval, and from Las Cases' *Memoirs on Napoleon's stay at St. Helena, to sections of Napoleon's testament and his final recommendations to his son.*

*Through the uniquely personal perspective provided by our selection of texts, we catch a glimpse of how the major events leading up to the fall of the Empire affected Napoleon personally and how Napoleon thus negotiated between private and public concerns during times of both triumph and despair.*

### The Birth and Baptism of the King of Rome

Paris, March 20, 1811<sup>1</sup>

...An awful night. At the first labor pains of Marie-Louise, Dubois announced to me that the child could be born only at the cost of his mother's life. I said absently: "save the mother," and it seemed to me that I was proclaiming the death of the King of Rome before he was even born.

A strong odor permeated our bedroom. Dubois took the forceps. Soon, the sheets looked like a giant red rose that smelled of iron. I held Marie-Louise's hand as she screamed. I thought I would pass out. It was as if the forceps were stretching my own flesh. I left. The operation lasted twenty minutes. When I came back, Marie-Louise was stiff, worn out from the pain. I caught just a glimpse of a small, motionless, purple bundle. For a period of seven minutes, the child gave no sign of life. Then, a long and powerful scream came out of the child. Marie-Louise opened her eyes, while the cannon thundered over the city. I wept.

Paris, March 21<sup>st</sup>

*I have a son. I am elated.*

The King of Rome. This name makes me dizzy. It seems to me that the abyss of centuries opens as if through an incantation.

I have not known similar emotions since my first victories, after Lodi, when crowds hailed me as the liberator of Italy and the World.

I had forgotten Jomini. While forceps were crowning the King of Rome, Jomini was waiting in the anteroom. He learned of my son's birth before the hundred blasts of the canon had begun their percussive solo.

Paris, March 22<sup>nd</sup>

The hour has come to break my old idols. My foot is on the throne of France. My reign will be carried on by Napoleon II. I am the master of my destiny. History speaks through my mouth...

To Francis I, Emperor of Austria in Vienna<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lo Duca, *Journal secret de Napoléon Bonaparte*. Paris: Ed de L'Archipel, 1949, pp 103-4.

Paris, March 20, 1811

Sir, my Brother and Father in law, yesterday the 19<sup>th</sup> at seven o'clock in the evening the Empress requested that I come to her quarters. I found her in her chaise longue beginning to feel the first pains of childbirth. She went to bed at eight o'clock and from that moment until six o'clock in the morning she experienced sharp pains, but they did not help her delivery along because they were back pains. The doctors thought that the delivery could be delayed up to twenty-four hours; that caused me to adjourn the entire court and to tell the Senate, the Municipal Body, and the Chapter of Paris, which were assembled, that they could take leave. This morning, at eight o'clock, the doctor came to my room, very worried, to inform me that the child was positioned on its side, that the delivery would be difficult, and that there would be great danger to the life of the baby. The Empress, weakened by the pain she had endured, kept up her courage until the end, and at nine o'clock, with the doctors declaring that there was not a moment to lose, the birth took place amidst the greatest anxiety but with the greatest success. The child is doing very well. The Empress is also doing well considering what she has gone through; she already slept a little and ate some food. Tonight, at eight o'clock, the child will be baptized privately. Since I am planning to have a public baptism in six weeks, I entrust Count Nicolaï, my chamberlain, to bring this letter to Your Majesty as well as another one to ask you to be the godfather of your grandson.

Your Majesty must know that the satisfaction I feel from this event is greatly increased by the fact that the bonds that unite us will live on considerably strengthened as a result.<sup>3</sup>

To the Empress Josephine, at the Castle of Navarre

Paris, March 22, 1811

My dearest, I received your letter; I thank you for it. My son is big and healthy. I hope he turns out well. He has my chest, my mouth, and my eyes. I hope that he fulfills his destiny.

(...)

Napoleon.

National News<sup>4</sup>

Paris, March 20, 1811

Today, March 20<sup>th</sup>, at nine-twenty in the morning, the hopes of France were fulfilled; her Majesty the Empress successfully gave birth to a Prince. The King of Rome and his august mother are in perfect health.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondance de Napoléon I - 1811*. Published at the bequest of the Emperor Napoleon III. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1858. Vol. 21 (August 2, 1810-March 31, 1811.). Letters 17496, 17499. Hereafter abbreviated *Correspondance*.

<sup>3</sup> According to the minutes. Archives from the Empire.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Moniteur Universel*, Number 80. Thursday, March 21, 1811.

<sup>5</sup> *Le Moniteur Universel*, Number 82. Saturday, March 23, 1811.

The 19<sup>th</sup>, between eight and nine in the evening, her Majesty felt the first pains of childbirth. The Princes and Princesses of the family, the Prince's dignitaries, the Ministers, the high officials of the Crown and the Empire, and the ladies and officers of the house were informed by the lady-in-waiting and went to the palace of the Tuileries.

From nine in the evening until six in the morning, labor contractions came at intervals; at six o'clock, they slowed down; but at eight o'clock, they began again with greater intensity and without interruption, and ended with the most successful delivery.

The Emperor, who, during the whole labor, did not cease to give the Empress the most loving care, displayed at this happy moment the greatest satisfaction. Knowing that the French people were waiting with great impatience for the moment when they could share his joy, His Majesty the Emperor gave the order to fire a salute of one hundred and one cannon shots to announce to France this great event.

(...)

The whole night preceding the blessed delivery of the Empress the churches of Paris were filled with a huge crowd of people sending their good wishes to heaven for the happiness of Their Majesties. As soon as the cannon shots were heard, the inhabitants of Paris could be seen everywhere at their windows, or stepping out of their houses, filling the streets and counting the shots with a cheerful solicitude. They shared their emotions with one another and finally let out a unanimous burst of joy when they saw that their hopes had been fulfilled and that their continued happiness was assured.

(...)

To respond to the eager crowd that comes continually to the palace to receive news of the health of Her Majesty the Empress and her august child, there will be, from eight in the morning until eight at night, a chamberlain on duty in the first drawing-room of the grand chambers to receive those who come. He will transmit to these visitors the news given to him twice daily by the health officers of the royal house.

(...)

*In the days following the birth of the King of Rome, various dignitaries came to present their congratulations to Napoleon. Their words and Napoleon's responses are printed in Le Moniteur Universel. The following are some of Napoleon's reactions.*

Paris, March 22, 1811  
9:00 p.m.

(...)

His Majesty replied:

"Senators,  
All that France shows me in these circumstances goes straight to my heart. The great destiny of my son will be achieved. With the love of the French people everything will come easy to him.

I am pleased by the feelings that you express to me."

(...)

His Majesty replied:

"Gentlemen, Advisors of the State,

I have passionately desired what Providence has given me. My son will live for the happiness and glory of France. Our children will devote themselves to ensuring his happiness and glory.

I thank you for the feelings that you express to me."

*A description of the festivities that took place in various cities of the Empire was published in Le Moniteur Universel.*

Brussels, March 21<sup>st</sup>

The happy event that has just given an heir to the throne of the Empire was announced at noon by telegraph and celebrated yesterday in this town with many displays of public joy. Once the sound of bells and gunshots had announced to the people of Brussels this good news, a crowd was soon seen gathering in the streets: people congratulated each other on the birth of a prince who will fulfill the glorious destiny of France. In the evening, the whole city was brightly lit; the Park and the Royal square offered a charming view of everything. People were able to see the prefecture, the house of General Chambarlhac, commander of the 24<sup>th</sup> military division, the city hall, the house of the Count of Ursel, mayor of Brussels, as well as many other public and private buildings. The beautiful weather also contributed to the good cheer of the public. For a good part of the night our streets and squares offered the spectacle of bustling crowds and presented a picture of the liveliest joy.

Rennes, March 21<sup>st</sup>

It is impossible to have a more delightful awakening than the one we had today at six in the morning. A hundred and one cannon blasts announced to us the happy birth of a Prince by her Majesty the Empress. This news came to us from Saint-Malo via telegraph dispatch. At noon, the municipality had the news proclaimed with great pomp to the sound of drums and trumpets throughout all the neighborhoods of the city. In the evening, the whole city was lit up, there was a ball at the town hall, and liquor was given out to the people. The joy is universal.

*Up through March 25, 1811, reports concerning the health of the Empress and her son were made available to the public.*

Paris, March 25<sup>th</sup>

Bulletin concerning Her Majesty, the Empress,  
From March 25<sup>th</sup>

Since Her Majesty the Empress has successfully begun nursing, and since the state of her health could not be any better at this stage, this bulletin shall be the last.  
Signed Corvisart, Dubois and Bourdier.

Bulletin concerning the King of Rome  
From March 25<sup>th</sup>



Since the health of His Majesty the King of Rome is as perfect as one could hope for, there will be no more bulletins.  
Signed Bourdois and Auvity.

*The following documents show with what great care and extreme attention to detail Napoleon planned the baptism of his son, initially scheduled for June 2, 1811 but then delayed until the 9<sup>th</sup>. Astronomers were even consulted to ascertain a moment when, as Napoleon lifted his son up in his arms, a ray of sunlight might come through the windows of the cathedral to shine on them (cf. Goubaut's painting of this event).*

To Count de Montalivet, Minister of the Interior in Paris.<sup>5</sup>

Paris, April 13<sup>th</sup> 1811

June 2<sup>nd</sup> is the date I have set for the baptism of the King of Rome, which will be celebrated in the metropolitan church of Notre-Dame of Paris. The Empress and I will solemnly attend and give grace to God for the birth of our son. After the ceremony at Notre-Dame, I will have dinner at the city hall of my good city of Paris, and there will be a fireworks display. On the same day, a *Te Deum* will be sung throughout the Empire.

I want all celebrations and parties to take place at the same time and according to the model you proposed. To that end, you should send instructions to the town mayors and allocate them funds to be spent for these festivities. You will present me with the list of expenses for the weddings that each of the main towns will perform; they will provide dowries to poor and orphan girls and unite them with former soldiers. I also want you to invite to the baptism of the King of Rome the mayors of the good cities, who will each be accompanied by two deputies chosen among the main deputies of the Conseil Général.<sup>6</sup> You will grant to each the necessary indemnities for the costs of travel so that during their stay in Paris they can appear in the appropriate apparel and have their people wear the livery of the town they represent.<sup>7</sup>

*Caroline, Queen of Naples and sister to the Emperor, turned down Napoleon's offer to become the child's godmother on the pretext of her poor health. In truth, Caroline and her husband, Murat, the King of Naples, were not on the best of terms with the Emperor, in part because of Napoleon's intentions to make the Kingdom of Naples a part of France.*

To Caroline Napoleon, Queen of the Two-Sicilies, in Naples.

Paris, April 20<sup>th</sup> 1811

My Sister, I've always liked to share with you all the happy events that concern me and so would like you to be the godmother of my son, whose birth filled me with joy.

<sup>5</sup> In *Correspondance*, vol. 22 (April 1, 1811 – Nov. 6, 1811). Letters 17604, 17638, 17768.

<sup>6</sup> *Conseil Général*: Highest administrative court in France, as well as the advisory board to the government concerning legal matters. Created the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1799, it replaced the institution of the *Conseil du roi*. It serves a dual governmental role: administrative and judicial (Encarta, Internet Encyclopedia).

<sup>7</sup> According to the minutes. Archives of the Empire.

I hope that the health of Your Majesty will soon allow her to come to Paris for the baptism ceremonies, which I have set for the second of June. If my hopes cannot be met, I encourage Her Majesty to give her proxy to the person to whom she would like to grant it. It would please me greatly if these new bonds that will form between my son and my sister will be for the King of Rome one more entitlement to your affection. Receive the assurance of the tender affection and high esteem with which I am,

Your Majesty's good brother.<sup>8</sup>

To Count Garnier, President of the Senate, in Paris

Palace of Saint-Cloud, June 4<sup>th</sup> 1811

Sir Count Garnier, president of the Senate, among all the graces that divine Providence has granted our Empire and us since our advent to the throne, the one that she has just accorded us, through the birth of a son, is the most eminent sign we could receive of her protection. Consequently, we have resolved to solemnly give grace. With our very dear spouse and companion, the Empress and Queen, we will proceed this coming June 9<sup>th</sup> to the metropolitan church of Notre-Dame of Paris to attend both the *Te Deum* that will be sung for this solemn occasion and the baptism of our dear Son, the King of Rome, which will be celebrated at the same time. We are writing you this letter so that you might make it known to the Senate that we desire that it come the said day, June 9<sup>th</sup>, to the metropolitan church of Paris, to join us in thanking God for this happy event that has ensured the happiness of our people.  
Napoleon.<sup>9</sup>

The baptism was celebrated at Notre-Dame, in the presence of the three great bodies of the State: the Senate, the *Conseil Général*, and the Legislature.<sup>10</sup> The magistrates and law officers, the Municipal councils and the delegations from fifty great cities, as well as the diplomatic corps, also participated. The handsome uniforms of the troops lined up from the Tuileries to Notre-Dame and the magnificence of the imperial procession offered a dazzling sight. But what increased the splendor of this triumphant march was the immense crowd of Parisian and foreign spectators; it seemed as if everybody had come out of their houses into the streets and public squares. Along the route taken by the procession the fronts of houses were covered with banners, and flags floated from windows. At the sight of the carriage in which the child was resting on his governess' lap, and which preceded the carriage of Their Majesties, the air was filled with general acclamations and wishes of prosperity. The religious ceremony took place with uncommon pomp. The godfather, the Emperor of Austria, was represented by the

<sup>8</sup> According to the minutes. Archives of the Empire.

<sup>9</sup> According to the original. Archives of the Empire.

<sup>10</sup> *Napoléon et Marie-Louise Souvenirs Historiques de M. Le Baron Méneval Ancien secrétaire du portefeuille de Napoléon premier consul et Empereur, ancien secrétaire de commandements de l'Impératrice-Régente. Seconde édition corrigée et augmentée.* Tome premier. Paris: Librairie D' Amyot, 1844, pp 439-440. Hereafter abbreviated *Napoléon et Marie-Louise*.

Grand Duke of Würzburg. The godmother was the Lady Mother<sup>11</sup>; the second godmother was the Queen of Naples, represented by Queen Hortense. A contemplative silence reigned during the ceremony. But when the Emperor took his son in his arms and showed him to the people, cheers and applause, which until then had been restrained by the sanctity of the act and the solemnity of the place, burst out from every corner.  
(...)

### *Napoleon and his Infant Son*

*Le Baron de Méneval (1778-1850), Napoleon's personal secretary for eleven years, gives this touching portrait of Napoleon's relations with his son in the summer of 1811<sup>13</sup>:*

Summer of 1811

During this time, the King of Rome grew in strength and beauty under the vigilant care of Madame de Montesquiou, who loved him like a son, and showed him the most meticulous attention. Every morning he was taken to his mother, who kept him until it was time for her bath. During the day, in the intervals between her music and drawing lessons, she saw him in his quarters and worked next to him on a piece of embroidery. Often, followed by the nurse who carried the child, she brought him to his father while he worked. When he was announced, the Emperor would stand up to greet him. Because access to his study was forbidden to all others, he did not let the nurse enter, and Marie-Louise would be asked to bring him his son herself. But the Empress was so unsure of herself that when the nurse handed him to her, the Emperor, waiting for her at the door of his office, eagerly came forward to take his son into his arms and carry him while covering him with kisses.

This study, which had seen the formation of many ingenious plans to repel the attacks of our eternal enemies and numerous administrative projects, was often also the witness of the tenderness of a father. How many times have I seen the Emperor keep his son next to him, as if he were eager to initiate him already into the art of governing!

His son sat on his lap or was held to his chest at all times. Whether seated on his favorite settee next to a fireplace decorated with two magnificent bronze busts of Scipio and Hannibal, busy reading an important report, or at his desk, covered with numerous papers and divided in the middle with sides spread out like wings, signing a dispatch in which every word had to be weighed, his son did not leave him. Gifted with a marvelous power of concentration, he could both attend to serious matters and pay attention to the whims of a child. Sometimes, taking a break from the important preoccupations that weighed on his mind, he would sit on the ground next to his dear son and play with him like a child himself, knowing what would entertain him and avoiding what would upset him. Napoleon had military figurines made that represented battalions, regiments, and military divisions; they were little pieces of mahogany of different sizes and colors with carved tops. When the Emperor wanted to try some new formation of troops, some new military move, he used these figurines, arranging them on the rug of the wooden floor to

give himself a more spacious field for maneuvers. Sometimes his son would find him intensely occupied with the arrangement of these figures, a prelude to one of those clever strategies that assured him success in his battles. His son, lying next to him, enchanted by the form and color of the figurines, which reminded him of his toys, was constantly touching and disturbing the order of the battle, often at the crucial moment when the enemy was about to be defeated. But such was the Emperor's presence of mind and affection for his son, that he was not annoyed by the disorder brought to his figurines and would begin rearranging his pieces without getting angry. His patience and kindness for this child were inexhaustible. It was not only because his son was heir to his own name and power that he liked him. When he held him in his arms and intoxicated himself with his caresses, thoughts of pride and ambition were far from his mind.

The Emperor ate his lunch alone. Every day, Madame de Montesquiou brought the King of Rome to his father's lunch. Napoleon would put him on his lap, amusing himself by feeding him and bringing his glass to his lips. He laughed a lot, scolding him for making a funny face when a drop of wine tickled his tongue. One day, the Emperor gave him something to eat from his plate--I don't know exactly what sort of food it was--and when the child tried to take it to his mouth the Emperor took it away. He wanted to continue this amusing game, but the third time the child turned his head away. His father then gave him the piece, but he obstinately refused it. When the Emperor showed surprise at that, Madame de Montesquiou said that the child did not like it when people tried to fool him. She added that he was proud . . . and sensitive. "He is proud and sensitive," repeated Napoleon: "this is very good! This is why I love him." And glad to find these two qualities in his son, he kissed him with tenderness. He would forget his obligations during these brief moments. The few people he admitted into the intimacy of his meal hour were always assured a kind reception.

(...)

*Between August and November 1811, Napoleon traveled to Belgium, Holland, and Germany.*

To Marshal Bessières, Duke of Istria, Commander of the Imperial Guard in Paris<sup>14</sup>

Boulogne, September 20, 1811

My Cousin, go often to visit the King of Rome; see Madame de Montesquiou, and take all the necessary measures to watch over his safety. Inform Madame de Montesquiou that, should something happen, it is to you she must come, you whom she must notify.

Napoleon

*Baron Jean Thiry, the author of a book on the King of Rome, describes the child's daily activities.*

<sup>11</sup> Lady Mother: Napoleon's mother.

<sup>13</sup> *Napoléon et Marie-Louise*, pp 445-449.

<sup>14</sup> *Correspondance*, vol. 22, letter 18145.

According to the original communicated by the Marshal's wife, the Duchess of Istria.

At the end of the year 1811, Napoleon thought often about his son.<sup>15</sup> He saw little of him, but was happy whenever he visited. The child was well in spite of the meticulous and overbearing attention that was paid to him; he was robust and energetic even though he was a bit tormented by teething, which is always a trial for children. He said dada and mama and, on January 1<sup>st</sup>, presented his parents with a superb bouquet, prepared by the court's florist. He never appeared at celebrations or at palace gatherings, but his name was often mentioned to please the master. And Talma, playing the Hector of Lucea de Lancival, would cry out: "Oh! God, protect the childhood of this Hector in the cradle!"

It is difficult to have an exact idea of his features at that time. His image, indeed, had become official, and artists such as Gérard, Isabey, and Prud'hon painted graceful portraits that were merely childlike reductions of those of the Emperor.

The King of Rome tries to walk; he plays with beautiful toys: a large wooly sheep on wheels with silver bells hanging from a collar of gold and velvet, ninepins of shapely wood, a three-octave piano, silver bells, even a beautiful carriage, given to him by the Queen of Naples, harnessed with two merino sheep and driven by a page, which took him on rides on the terrace along the river bank. This spectacle delighted the Parisians and popular images of this childhood scene spread throughout the country. At other times, when the weather was colder, the young King, escorted by a squad of chasseurs from the Royal Guard, passed rapidly down the boulevards to go to the Monceau Park for a short walk (...)

### Napoleon Inquires about His Son through Letters

*The following are excerpts from the epistolary exchange between Napoleon and Marie-Louise that began in 1810 and lasted until August 1814. When away at war, Napoleon kept in touch almost daily with his wife. In these short notes written on the battlefield, he advises her to take care of her health, gives her guidance on how to conduct herself as an Empress, and sends his loving thoughts to his son. Rarely does he refer to details of the battles and, except at the very end when he asks Marie-Louise to seek the support of her father, never does he allude to his own troubles. Though the references to the King of Rome are sometimes short—Napoleon just sending a kiss or two to the "little king," as he affectionately called him—we are given to see his endearing attachment to and pride over his son. Interestingly, it is sometimes Napoleon who provides the Empress with an update of their son's condition, since his governess, Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, was under explicit orders to report always first to Napoleon. Included in this selection are thus a few of Napoleon's letters to Montesquiou, thanking her for her services.*

(...)The little King is doing well (...) <sup>16</sup> All Yours. Your, NAP.  
8 o'clock in the evening [October, 1811]

<sup>15</sup> Thiry, Baron Jean, *Le Roi de Rome*. Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1968, pp. 234-235.

<sup>16</sup> *Lettres Inédites de Napoléon Ier à Marie-Louise, Ecrites de 1810 à 1814*. With an introduction and notes by Louis Madelin. Paris: Ed. Bibliothèques Nationales de France, 1935, p 24. Hereafter abbreviated *Lettres Inédites*.

To Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, Governess of the Children of France, Paris.<sup>17</sup>

Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, I have received all of your letters up until May 16<sup>th</sup>. I am pleased to hear of the good health of the King. In all medical matters, I have faith in my top doctor, Corvisart. NAPOLEON

(...) My darling, The little King is doing well; you must have received news of him (...) <sup>18</sup> Yours faithfully. NAP.

Thorne, [June] 6<sup>th</sup> [1812], 1 o'clock in the afternoon

My kind Louise (...) My health is extremely good, the little King is doing well, he is going to be weaned. I hope that you have received news of this. Your faithful husband. NAP.

[June] 9<sup>th</sup> [1812], 9 o'clock in the evening

My darling, I have not received any letters from you today.<sup>19</sup> I suppose you are in Wursburg. You will soon see the little King, who will know you before he knows me; you will find him quite grown after three months absence (...) NAP.

Wilna, July 12<sup>th</sup> [1812]

(...) I envy the joy you will have in kissing the little King; kiss him for me. He will have grown a lot. Tell me if he is beginning to talk. Adio, mio ben. You know how much I love you. All yours. NAP.

Wilna, July 14<sup>th</sup> [1812]

My darling (...) <sup>20</sup> Kiss your son twice for me. I hear he is a delight. I am letting Madame de Montesquiou know how satisfied I am with her care (...) NAP.

Gloubokoé, [July] 18<sup>th</sup> [1812], at 3 o'clock in the afternoon

My love, I received your letter from July 8<sup>th</sup> in which I see that you must have returned to Saint-Cloud today, the 19<sup>th</sup>. Kiss the little King twice for me. Tell me how he strikes you, if he is starting to talk, if he is walking, and, finally, if you are satisfied with his progress. My health is extremely good, I have nothing more to wish for in that respect, since I am doing better than in Paris. My affairs are going well; the only thing I miss is my kind Louise, but I am glad to know that she is close to my son (...) All yours. NAP.

Gloubokoé, [July] 19<sup>th</sup> [1812], at 4 o'clock in the afternoon

[August] 11<sup>th</sup>, [1812], at 11 o'clock in the evening

(...) The good news that you send me about my son makes me happy. Farewell my darling, my health is good. NAP.

To Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, Governess of the Children of France, Paris.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Correspondance*, vol. 23 (12 Novembre 1811-30 Juin 1812.), letter 18715.

<sup>18</sup> *Collection des Plus Belles Pages, Napoléon: Lettres- Discours- Proclamations- Ordres- Messages*.

Prod'Homme, J.-G. Paris: Mercvve de France, 1938. Hereafter abbreviated *Collection*.

<sup>19</sup> *Lettres Inédites*, letters 48, 49.

<sup>20</sup> *Collection*.

<sup>21</sup> *Correspondance*, letter 18802.

Koenigsberg, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1812

Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, I received your letter from June 6<sup>th</sup>. I can only express to you how satisfied I am by the cares you bestow upon the little King. I hope to hear from you soon that his last four teeth have come in. I granted the nurse all that you requested; you can reassure her of that. NAPOLEON

My kind Louise, I received your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> from Wursburg.<sup>22</sup> You were right to be happy at the thought of seeing the little King. By this time you will have written to me how you found him and what impression he made on you (...) NAP.

G[[]]oubo[koé], July 21<sup>st</sup> [1812]

*With the advance on Moscow having been decided on July 29<sup>th</sup>, Napoleon continued to correspond with Marie-Louise about the health and progress of their son.*

My darling, the last letter I received from you was from the Castle of Compiègne. You must have arrived early at Saint-Cloud and you will have had the pleasure of seeing our son walk to greet you. Kiss him for me (...) NAP.

Viteps[k], July 30<sup>th</sup> [1812]

My love, I received your letter from the 19<sup>th</sup>. It seems that the little King was in a bad mood. I am glad he called out to papa for help (...) My health is good. My affairs are going well. I love you and I hope to receive news from you tomorrow and details about your son. NAP

Vit[epsk], August 2<sup>nd</sup> [1812]

My darling, I received your letter from July 25<sup>th</sup>. I am glad to see that the heat is not overwhelming in Paris, as it is here. The little King must be amusing you since he is beginning to talk and is more aware of his surroundings. I hear he is a little devil, has quite an appetite, and is very rambunctious (...) All yours. NAP.

Vit[epsk], August 8<sup>th</sup> [1812]

Viazma, August 29<sup>th</sup> [1812]

My darling, I received your letter from the 14<sup>th</sup>, in which I learned that the little King recovered from his fever; I know how much this must have worried you. Luckily it ended quickly. Let me know tomorrow whether he is completely recovered (...) Farewell, my love. All yours. Your faithful, NAP.

Viazma, August 30<sup>th</sup> [1812]

I learned that the little King has regained all his good humor; kiss him twice for me.

My darling, I am pleased to learn that your health was not affected by the fatigue of the 15<sup>th</sup> and that the little King no longer has a fever. That must have worried you, even though you were told that it was nothing serious (...) NAP.

<sup>22</sup> *Lettres Inédites*, letters 54, 60, 61, 67, 81, 82, 83.

Velitschevo, September 1<sup>st</sup> [1812], at 2 o'clock in the morning

To Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, Governess of the Children of France, Paris.<sup>23</sup>  
Smolensk, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1812

Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, I received the portrait of the King, and I found that it bears a strong resemblance to him. It gives me the chance, which I seize with pleasure, to tell you how satisfied I am with the care you give him. NAPOLEON

My darling, I received your letter from the 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>24</sup> According to what you tell me, the little King is being very naughty. I received his portrait on the eve of the Battle of Moscova. I displayed it for all to see; the whole army found it wonderful: it is a masterpiece (...) NAP.

Mojaisk, September 9<sup>th</sup> [1812]

*The following is Méneval's account of Napoleon receiving the portrait of his son by Gérard during the Russian campaign. As the Battle of Moscova (also referred to as Borodino) drew nearer, Napoleon is reported to have cried out, "Take him away, it is too early for him to see a battlefield!"*

(...) On the eve of the memorable Battle of Moscova, the Emperor, preoccupied by the terrible struggle he was about to enter, enjoyed the purest and sweetest of delights in receiving the portrait of his son.<sup>25</sup> Since Monsieur de Bausset was going to rejoin the headquarters, the Empress charged him with bringing the portrait to the Emperor. In his impatience, the Emperor ordered that the box containing the portrait be opened immediately. The royal child was depicted sitting in his cradle, playing with a cup-and-ball game. The ball might have been taken for the globe and the stick for a scepter, the playthings of his childhood. Napoleon gazed at this sweet image with an emotion that was intensified by the thought of the distance separating him from France, and by the preparations for a battle he had long desired, but about which he was deeply worried. He could not grow tired of looking at the portrait. He ordered one of his servants to take it outside of his tent and display it so that the sentry of guards could see it. This sight made all the officers and nearby soldiers come rushing up. To satisfy the curiosity of the ever-growing crowd of soldiers, the Emperor placed the painting on one of the campstools of his tent and left it exposed throughout the day in full view of the army. The sympathy and sentiments they expressed only heightened his emotion (...)

*Napoleon's queries into his son's health, from the condition of his teeth to his speech development, punctuate the letters written between the Fall of 1812 and the early part of 1814, as Napoleon is engaged in various campaigns (1812 Russia; 1813 Germany; 1814 France).*

<sup>23</sup> *Correspondance*, vol. 24 (1 juillet 1812- 27 février 1813.), letter 19118.

<sup>24</sup> *Collection*.

<sup>25</sup> *Napoléon et Marie-Louise*, pp 35-36.

*The battle of Moscova in September 1812 was one of the bloodiest battles conducted by Napoleon, with more than 50,000 Russians killed or wounded. On September 15, 1812, the Grand Army began its march through Moscow. By September 18, the city had suffered enormous damage from the fires set by the Russians. The army lost thousands of its men in the flames. On September 23, Napoleon sent a letter to Czar Alexander, seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The French retreat would begin on October 18.*

My darling, I received your letter of September 7<sup>th</sup>, which was the day of the battle of Moscova; you now know of this great event.<sup>26</sup> Everything is going well here, the heat is easing up, the weather is beautiful: we have shot so many arsonists that they have desisted. One quarter of the town remains, the other three quarters have burned down. My health is extremely good. Farewell, my love, take care of yourself, be happy, kiss your son four times for me; all the details you send me about him make me happy and make me long to see him. All yours. NAP.  
Moscow, September 23<sup>rd</sup> [1812]

(...) I beg you to take care of yourself, to be happy, and to kiss the little King often for me. How did the silly little child not recognize his nurse! He is a little rascal! Farewell, my love. All yours. NAP.  
Moscow, September 24<sup>th</sup> [1812]

My dear Louise. I received your letter from the 9<sup>th</sup> and was pleased to see that your health is extremely good, that your son is behaving so well and brings you so much satisfaction. My health is good. All yours. NAP.  
Moscow, [September] 25<sup>th</sup> [1812]

My darling, I received your letter from September 12<sup>th</sup>, in which you presumed I was in Moscow. You were not mistaken. Everyone tells me good things about the little King. I greatly wish to see him; kiss him for me and do not doubt that I share all of your feelings and that [I am] all yours. Adio, mio ben.

My health is extremely good. NAP.  
Moscow, September 27<sup>th</sup> [1812]

My darling, I received your letter from October 20<sup>th</sup>. I am waiting for you to inform me shortly that my son's teeth have come in and that he has gotten over the little crisis that tested his health (...) All yours. NAP.  
November 3<sup>rd</sup> [1812]

(...) I hope that you will soon inform me that my son's teeth have come in and that he has regained his high spirits (...) All yours. NAP.  
November 5<sup>th</sup> [1812]

*On October 23, an attempted coup d'état by General Malet further weakened Napoleon. While Napoleon was still retreating from Russia, Malet announced in Paris that the Emperor was deceased. Though soon arrested, Malet was able to take over the government for a short period of time. Napoleon learned of this on November 6 and was angered that no one in the provisional government had thought to place the King of Rome as head of State; his belief that his son would automatically succeed him was thus strongly shaken. The news affected him so deeply that he was not long in returning to Paris, leaving behind the remnants of the Grand Army. By December 18 he was back in the capital.*

(...) Kiss my son, I greatly wish to see him. I know he will be so grown-up and so good, I hope. Adio, mio ben. All yours. NAP.  
Smolensk, November 12<sup>th</sup> [1812]

*The following letters were written during the German campaign of 1813.*

My love, I finally received the little King's letter case, which was brought to me by Meunié. I thank you for it. He seems to be full of charm; I found him delightful, and it is a very kind gesture on your part. I said to put all of your letters in it (...) Your faithful husband. NAP.  
Dresden, May 16<sup>th</sup> [1813]

My darling, I received your letter of the 19<sup>th</sup>.<sup>27</sup> I was glad to hear about the state of your health and that of my son, whom I presume to be quite grown and already a good talker (...) All yours. NAP.  
May 25<sup>th</sup> [1813]

My love (...) what you tell me of my son makes me want to see him very much.<sup>28</sup>  
NAP.  
Dresden, June 16<sup>th</sup> [1813]

(...) My love, what you tell me of the jealousy of the little King made me laugh. I would really like to see him. Kiss him three times for me (...) NAP.  
Dresden, June 27<sup>th</sup> [1813]

My darling...did your son recognize you and did you find that he is growing up well? (...) Adio, mio ben. All yours. NAP.  
Libstat, September 10<sup>th</sup> [1813]

A kiss to your son. Everyone tells me that he is delightful and that you spoil him. NAP.  
Dresden, September 13<sup>th</sup> [1813]

<sup>26</sup> *Lettres Inédites*, letters 98, 99, 100, 101, 121, 122, 123, 160.

<sup>27</sup> *Collection\**

<sup>28</sup> *Lettres Inédites*, letters 179, 184, 224, 225.

## Napoleon's Demise and the Break-Up of his Family

*Napoleon's personal and official letters change in tone during the final weeks of struggle against the last coalition of Allies, which included Britain, Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Sweden. By early 1814, thousands of enemy troops had already swept into France and had reached Burgundy. Though Napoleon was successful on a number of occasions (including at Montmirail against the Silesian army composed of Prussian and Russian troops), he ultimately lost against the Allies and was sent to Elba, where he would remain in exile from May 4, 1814 to February 26, 1815.*

*The following is the account given by Hildegard Hawthorne in Phantom King: the Story of Napoleon's Son (New York, London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937, pp.84-85) of Napoleon's last visit with his son. It is representative of the type of biographies reconstructing Napoleon's relationship to his son. This last meeting would have taken place on January 28, 1814, though other records indicate January 23 as the exact date.*

"Father and son had their lunch together, chatting, laughing, giving each other selected bits. The little King sang one of his nursery songs his Chan-Chan had taught him, very proud, for it was a new accomplishment. They were still enjoying each other when the Countess came to take her charge away for his afternoon nap.

He flung his arms tight around his father's neck:

"I don't want to go. Papa and I are playing."

"You must go, my little King. Do not forget that a King has his duty. I want you always to obey Maman 'Quiou.'"

His father pressed him in his arms, kissed him, and gave him to the governess.

"Guard him, Madame."

She nodded, unable to speak.

At three o'clock that night, the final preparations made, Napoleon stole softly into his son's bedroom. The child was sleeping soundly, no longer in the magnificent cradle, which he had outgrown, but in a small bed, carved and gilded. A lamp whose wick floated in oil was burning, shaded from the eyes of the sleeper, but lending a dim light by which the father stood gazing down on the little figure for some time. Then, bending, he brushed the curling blond hair with his lips and walked quickly, with no backward glance, from the room, closing the door very gently after him.

Never again in this world was he to see his little King."

*Le Baron de Méneval recounts the last few days of the Emperor in Paris.*

(...) Napoleon had achieved in six weeks all that will, strength of character, and superhuman activity could achieve.<sup>29</sup> He could no longer put off his departure for the army. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, two days before his departure, the Emperor gathered the officers of the legions of the National Guard in the Tuileries Palace; he presented to them the Empress and the King of Rome, ending his speech with these moving words: "I am leaving. I am going to fight the enemy. I entrust to you what I hold most dear, the Empress, my wife, and the King of Rome, my son." He confirmed through the issuance

<sup>29</sup> Napoléon et Marie-Louise, p 106.

of new letters patent the regency of the Empress, and left on the 24<sup>th</sup>, after kissing his wife and son, whom he would never see again (...)

*In this letter to his brother, King Joseph, Napoleon declared that Paris would never be occupied while he is alive. Yet Napoleon was at the same time making provisions in case the enemy further advanced into the country. He wanted to keep his wife and son close by to him, foreseeing that Vienna would spirit them away in his absence. His foreboding would soon come true.*

To King Joseph, Lieutenant General of the Emperor, Paris.<sup>30</sup>

Nogent, February 8, 1814, 11 o'clock in the morning

(...) if, by unforeseen circumstances, I should go to the Loire, I would not want to leave the Empress or my son very far from me, because they would probably both be captured and taken away to Vienna. That would be even more likely to happen if I were no longer alive (...)

If we should lose the battle and there is news of my death, you will be informed of it before my ministers. Arrange for the Empress and the King of Rome to leave for Rambouillet; order the Senate, the *Conseil d'Etat*, and all the troops to assemble at the Loire; leave in Paris the prefect, an imperial commissioner, or a mayor.

I told you that Madame and the Queen of Westphalia, who is staying with Madame, may stay in Paris. If the Viceroy has returned to Paris, you could leave her there also. But never allow the Empress and the King of Rome to fall into the hands of the enemy.

Rest assured, Austria would then have an ulterior motive and would bring her to Vienna with a lot of privileges, under the pretext of seeing the Empress happy. The French would then be forced to adopt all that England and Russia dictate to them (...)

Besides, it is in the very interest of the country that the Empress and the King of Rome not stay in Paris, since the welfare of the country cannot be separated from their persons (...)

In such difficult and critical circumstances, we do what we must and we let the rest go. If I should live, I must be obeyed, and I do not doubt that it will be so; if I should die, my reigning son and the regent Empress must not, for the sake of the French people, let themselves be taken and they must retreat to the last village with their last soldiers. Recall what the wife of Philippe V said. What would they say, indeed, about the Empress? That she abandoned our throne and that of her son. And the Allies would rather put an end to everything by taking them as prisoners to Vienna (...)

If the Empress and the King of Rome were in Vienna, or in the hands of the enemy, those of you who would like to organize a defense would be considered rebels.

As for me, I would prefer that my son's throat be slit rather than to have him be brought up in Vienna as an Austrian prince; and I have a good enough opinion of the Empress to believe that she shares this same opinion, as much as a wife and mother can.

<sup>30</sup> Correspondance, letter 21210.



I have never seen *Andromache* without pitying the fate of Astyanax outliving the rest of his house, nor without thinking it would have been best for him not to survive his father.

*Napoleon gave orders that an engraving of the King of Rome sent to him by Marie-Louise be reproduced and distributed in the hopes of swaying public opinion in his favor at a time when France was losing faith that it could ever regain its supremacy.*

My love,<sup>31</sup> you sent me a very beautiful candy box with a portrait of the King of Rome praying.<sup>32</sup> I would like you to engrave it with this inscription: I pray to God that he saves my father and France. This little engraving is so interesting that it will please everyone(. . .) Give a kiss to my son, keep well, and never doubt all of my love. NAP.  
Montereau, February 20, 1814 at 9 o'clock in the morning.

My love, I received your letter from the 20<sup>th</sup>, at 10 o'clock at night. The portrait of the little king with the caption, "God save my father and France" should be engraved within 36 hours. A meticulous copy can be made in 2 minutes time. Give appropriate orders for it to be on sale in Paris within 48 hours. Farewell, my friend, tell me that you no longer have a cold and that you are keeping well. NAP.  
Nogent, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1814 at 4 o'clock in the evening.

My dear Louise (. . .)Your father was in Troyes, very sad and feeling rather poorly. He saw little of the Russians; they don't like one another. You will do well to write him and complain to him that he does not let you hear about him and that he has forgotten you. You should tell him that he could help us even while serving the interests of his monarchy, and that he should be reasonable, have will-power, and not be the instrument of England and Russia. In short, write him a compelling letter and tell him of your interests and those of your son. Tell him at the same time that we are resolved to die rather than agree to a shameful and dishonorable peace, which, moreover, would be bad policy since it would not last. Farewell, my friend. All yours. NAP.  
Troyes, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1815 at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

To King Joseph, Lieutenant General of the Emperor in Paris<sup>33</sup>  
Arcis-sur-Aube, February 27, 1814 at 5 o'clock in the evening.

I have received some engravings of the King of Rome. I would like for you to substitute the inscription, "God watch over my father and over France," with this one: "I

<sup>31</sup> *Lettres Inédites*, letters 264, 266, 269.

<sup>32</sup> This portrait is famous. Thousands of prints were distributed and for a long time one could find them in even the most humble abodes. It was done by a young lady by the name of Thibault (cf. The letter from Joseph to the Emperor on February 20, Gachot, I, 279) and not by Isabey, as Masson believed. That same day, Napoleon writes to Champigny, intendant to the crown: "The Empress has sent me a little portrait of the king of Rome praying to God that seemed to me extremely interesting... Denon should have this caption engraved: I pray to God for my father and for France. This little engraving, if it can be made in 48 hours, would make a great impression..."

<sup>33</sup> *Correspondance*, letter 21398.

pray to God for my father and for France." This one is simpler. I would also like for you to make copies representing the King in the National Guard uniform.

*Napoleon reiterates his concerns about his wife and son to his brother, King Joseph, and he again requests that should the enemy be at Paris's steps, Marie-Louise and the King of Rome should be sent to the Loire.*

Letter to King Joseph, Napoleon's brother.<sup>34</sup>

Reims, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1814

In accordance with the verbal instructions that I gave you and in the spirit of all my letters, you should not allow, under any circumstances, the Empress and the King of Rome to fall into the hands of the enemy. I am about to maneuver in such a way that you may be without news from me for several days. If the enemy should march on Paris with such force that all resistance becomes impossible, send off toward the Loire the Regent, my son, the great dignitaries, the ministers, the chief officers of the crown, Baron La Bouillerie, and the treasury. Do not leave my son's side, and remember that I would prefer to know he is in the Seine than in the hands of the enemies of France. The fate of Astyanax, prisoner of the Greeks, always seemed to me the most unfortunate fate in history.

Your affectionate brother,  
Signed Napoleon

*Napoleon's letter of March 16 to Marie-Louise, written on the same day as the preceding one to King Joseph, is astonishingly devoid of the concerns that are obviously weighing on Napoleon. But the letters that follow do directly address the crisis at hand. Marie-Louise and their son first stay in Blois. Napoleon, counting on Emperor Francis of Austria to come to his rescue on account of his daughter and grandson, continues to urge Marie-Louise to ask for her father's help—but, as we soon learn, to no avail. Francis will instead claim to be helping his daughter by having her sever all links with Napoleon. (This help will eventually include finding a lover for his daughter, Adam-Adalbert Neipperg, an officer in the Austrian army, who will marry her in 1821.) By April 8, 1814, Napoleon was telling Marie-Louise that, with the armistice and an act of abdication in favor of Napoleon II signed, she should join him soon in Fontainebleau. He recommended, however, that she stop in Orleans on her way, since he was about to leave Fontainebleau himself. Their reunion was thus postponed and, in the end, never took place.*

My good Louise, I received your letter dated March 15<sup>th</sup> at 10 at night.<sup>35</sup> I am happy to see that your health is better. Mine is good as well. My troops entered Châlons yesterday; these days of rest are doing me good. Give a little kiss to my son. Everything

<sup>34</sup> *Napoléon et Marie-Louise*, pp 125-126.

<sup>35</sup> *Lettres Inédites*, letters 288, 298, 299, 300.

you tell me gives me hope that I will find him much grown up; he will soon turn 3. All yours. NAP.

Rhins, March 16, 1814, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

My friend, the auditor Paravicini arrived and gave me news of you. You can 1. Stay at Blois, 2. Send me whomever you like and do as you please, 3. Issue proclamations and call meetings as the provisional Government of Paris does, and 4. Write a moving letter placing you and your son in your father's care. Send the Duke of Cadore there. Let your father know that the time has come for him to help us. Farewell, my friend, keep well. All yours. NAP.

Fontainebleau], April 3, 1814, at 6 o'clock in the evening.

My dear Louise, I received your letter of April 6<sup>th</sup>. I am glad to hear that your health is holding up. I had greatly feared that these unfortunate events would destroy your health. I am greatly concerned for you and my son; as you may imagine, I am less so for myself. My health is good. Give a kiss to my son and write to your father every day so that he knows where you are. Farewell, my dear Louise, my heart grieves thinking about your troubles. All yours. NAP.

Fontainebleau, April 7, 1814.

My friend, I received your letter of the 7<sup>th</sup>. I was glad to see that your health is better than one could have thought given all your worries. A truce was concluded and an aide-de-camp of the Russian Emperor should have joined you in order to escort you here; but I sent word for you to stop at Orleans since I am myself about to leave here. I am waiting at this point for Caulincourt to have settled things with the Allies. Russia would like for me to have sovereignty over the Island of Elba and for me to reside there. They would grant Tuscany to you and your son after you. This would enable you to be with me as long as you please and to stay in a pleasant country favorable to your health. However, Schwarzenberg opposes this in the name of your father. It seems that your father is our fiercest enemy. I do not know what has been settled. I am angry that I have nothing more than my bad fortune to share with you. I would have put an end to my life if I did not think that it would intensify your sorrows. If Madame de Montesquiou wants to complete the education of the King, she can do so, but she should not make too great a sacrifice (. . .) Farewell, my good Louise. I feel sorry for you. Write to your father and ask him for Tuscany for yourself, since I do not want more than the Island of Elba for myself. Farewell, my love. Give a kiss to your son.

April 8, 1814.

[Not signed].

*On April 11<sup>th</sup>, Napoleon signed a second act of abdication, renouncing every claim over his Empire and accepting to leave for Elba. The following day, Napoleon attempted suicide but was saved by his valet and doctor. He is reported as having said: "it was contrary to God's will."*

The Treaty of Fontainebleau of April 11, 1814.<sup>36</sup>

V. The Duchies of Parma, Placentia, and Guastalla shall be granted in full property and sovereignty to Her Majesty the Empress Marie-Louise. They shall pass to the Prince, her son, and to his direct descendants. The Prince shall henceforth take the title of Prince of Parma, Placentia, and Guastalla.

*Napoleon agreed to Marie-Louise meeting her father in Rambouillet. He bade her farewell, as if already knowing he would never see her again. Though Marie-Louise, who appeared to be in poor health, claimed to want to join Napoleon, the meeting never took place. Francis I convinced his daughter to go to Vienna instead, and then to Aix, where she could recuperate. From there she went to Parma, which was allotted to her in the Treaty of Fontainebleau. Whenever Marie-Louise attempted to join her husband, Francis I insured that Napoleon's son not be part of the trip. These attempts to join or visit Napoleon at Elba and later at St. Helena thus led to nothing, as the Austrian oligarchy pursued every means to make their separation final.*

My dear Louise, I received your letter.<sup>37</sup> I approve of you going to Rambouillet where your father will come join you. That is the only consolation that you can receive in our misfortunes. For a week, I have eagerly awaited this moment. Your father has been misguided and has been bad for us, but he will be a good father for you and your son. Caulaincourt arrived.<sup>38</sup> Yesterday, I sent you a copy of the arrangements that he had signed assuring your son a future. Farewell, my sweet Louise. You are what I love most in the world. My misfortunes touch me only by the pain that they bring you. All through life, you will love the most tender of husbands. Give a kiss to your son. Farewell, my Louise. All yours. Napoleon.

Fontainebleau, [April] 13, 1814 at 3 o'clock in the morning.

My good Louise, I received from Laplace your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>39</sup> Everything he told me touched me deeply and the hope that your health will overcome all the adversities of fate gives me strength. Isamei brought me a portrait of you--the one where you are holding your son in your arms. The portrait gave me great pleasure. I believe that I will

<sup>36</sup> Emmanuel de Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Editions du Seuil, 1968, p 1483. Hereafter abbreviated *Mémorial*.

<sup>37</sup> *Marie-Louise et Napoléon 1813-1814: Lettres Inédites de l'Impératrice avec les réponses déjà connues de Napoléon de la même époque*. Paris : Librairie Stock, 1955, letter 168.

<sup>38</sup> Napoleon carried a small red leather portfolio where he kept together all the letters received from the Empress. He ordered Caulaincourt to keep them to give to his son (soon to be Prince of Parma) when he grew up. He took the poison previously prepared for him, which he always wore around his neck, in a little sachet. He suffered atrociously for several hours, and then took to vomiting. Around 11 in the morning, the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, he recovered. "I am condemned to live," he said

Marie-Louise never knew the farewell letter, a fact that was to have some consequences. As for the portfolio, Caulaincourt must have returned it to the Emperor; it may be the same one he gave to Joseph, June 11, 1815.

Napoleon's will to live was perhaps determined by Marie-Louise's letter of April 12<sup>th</sup>, which was believed lost. It arrived on the 13<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon.

<sup>39</sup> *Lettres Inédites*, letters 307, 309.

finally be able to leave tomorrow, and I hope to reach the restful island before the first of May. . . Farewell, my friend. Love me and never doubt the feelings of your NAP.  
Fontainebleau, April 19, 1814 at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

My dear Louise (. . .) I hope that you are in good health, that you will have courage and will uphold the honor of your rank and of my destiny without minding the difficulties fate has dealt us lately. Give a kiss to my son. Look after him. Farewell, my sweet friend. All yours for life.

[Unsigned.]  
Fontainebleau, April 19, 1814, 11 o'clock in the evening.

*The following letter by Napoleon to Marie-Louise and their son was found in a cabinet at Fontainebleau. It bears the date 1814, but does not give a specific day. I secured a copy from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. No further information could be obtained.*

Napoleon's Farewell to Marie-Louise and His Son.<sup>40</sup>  
(. . .)

Poor child, your cradle was covered with roses, and it might be that the rest of your life will be strewn only with thorns!

Poor child, rejoice a bit longer in the sweet ignorance of your age. If the traits of your father are not still profoundly engraved in your mind, try to forget them forever. . . But no, if the heavens grant you life, you will not be able to take a step in Europe that doesn't retrace my glory, my extravagance, and my fall.

Oh let my example at least be a lesson for you! Little son of a powerful emperor, descendant of the greatest monarchs in the world, perhaps you will reign one day. Ah! Refrain from imitating your father! Imitate rather your maternal ancestors; they were the delights of their subjects, for they were their fathers, sacrificing everything for their subjects' happiness; above all spare human blood.

Oh! If I could reclaim the throne! But no, I can no longer think about it. Besides, men really are not worth the trouble that comes with governing them. Farewell, my dear wife. When I reach my island and know your residence, I will send you news of me and will implore you to give me some of you and my son.

Signed Napoleon.

*Having expressed concern about Marie-Louise's health and recommended that she go to Tuscany to recover, Napoleon in his August 18, 1814 letter becomes impatient that she is not joining him. By that time, Marie-Louise had promised not to hold any communication with her husband without the consent of her father, to whom she handed over all letters from Elba. Upon discovering that even his private letters to his wife were being shown to the Emperor, and that Marie-Louise was forbidden to reply, Napoleon stopped writing to her altogether.*

<sup>40</sup> Imprimerie de L.-P. Setier, Cloître Saint-Benoît (printed and published after a copy found in the Emperor's private desk, in his cabinet, at the castle of Fontainebleau), 1814.

I think you should come as soon as possible to Tuscany, where the waters are just as good as those in Aix-en-Savoie.<sup>41</sup> This would have so many advantages. I would receive news of you more often, you would be closer to Parma, you would be able to have your son with you, and you would not worry anyone anymore. Your journey to Aix can only cause inconveniences. If this letter finds you there, spend only one season there and then leave for Tuscany for the sake of your health. My health is good, my feelings for you the same, and my desire to see you and prove my affection for you very great. Farewell, my good friend. A loving kiss for my son. All yours. NAP.  
July 3, 1814

*Official letters to different dignitaries were no more successful in getting Marie-Louise to join him at Elba. The situation can be blamed in part on Marie-Louise's indecision and her father's clever manipulations to regain control over his daughter and take charge of his grandson's education, which entailed cutting off all ties and forbidding any reference to Napoleon.*

To General Count Bertrand, Grand Marshall of the Palace.<sup>42</sup>

Porto-Ferrajo, August 9, 1814  
Monsieur Count Bertrand, Colonel Laczinski, who leaves today at 2 o'clock to go back to Livourne, will go from there to Aix, where he will carry a letter from me for the Empress. Write to Méneval to let him know that I am expecting the Empress by the end of August, that I would like her to make my son come, and that it is absurd that I should not be receiving any news of him, for letters are being kept from me. This ridiculous measure is probably the result of orders from some subordinate minister and cannot come from his father. Nobody has any rights over the Empress and her son.  
Napoleon.

Island of Elba, August 18, 1814

My good Louise,<sup>43</sup>

I have written to you often. I suppose you have done the same, and yet I have not received any of your letters since the one written within a few days of your departure from Vienna. I have not received any news of my son either. This conduct is rather ridiculous and cruel. Madame<sup>44</sup> is here and in good health; she is nicely settled. I am in good health. Your lodging is ready and I am expecting you in September for the harvesting of the grapes. No one has the right to oppose your coming. I have written to you on that score. So, come. I am awaiting you with impatience. You know all the feelings that I have for you. I will stop here since it is possible that this letter will not reach you (. . .) Complain of the behavior that they are exhibiting, preventing a woman and child from writing to me. Such behavior is quite despicable. Adio, mio bene. NAP.

<sup>41</sup> Lettres Inédites, letter 316.

<sup>42</sup> Correspondance, vol. 27, letter 21604.

<sup>43</sup> Lettres Inédites, letter 317.

<sup>44</sup> Napoleon's mother.

To Ferdinand-Joseph, Grand Duke of Tuscany, in Florence<sup>45</sup>

Porto-Ferraio, October 10, 1814

Monsieur my Brother and very dear Uncle,

Having received no news from my wife since August 10<sup>th</sup>, and none from my son for six months, I am giving the horseman Colonna this letter. I ask your Royal Highness to let me know if she will allow me to address a letter for the Empress once a week, and I ask that she send me in return news of her and the letters of Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, the governess of my son. I am honored that Your Royal Highness, in spite of the events that have changed so many individuals, still retains some friendship for me. If she would like to give me some further assurance of this, I would be greatly comforted. In this case, I beg her to be favorable to this little district, which shares the feelings that Tuscany bears for her. I beg that her Royal Highness not doubt the constancy of the feelings she knows I have for her, as well as the perfect esteem and high consideration in which I hold her. And may she give my regards to her children.

Napoleon

*At the onset of the hundred days (February 26, 1815-June 22, 1815), Napoleon attempted once again to be joined by his wife and son. To that end, he planned on having the Chamber make a motion in favor of the King of Rome. After entering Paris on March 20, 1815, Napoleon went to the Tuileries palace, where he was warmly and enthusiastically received. As M. de Norvins reports, "he would have been completely happy if the two beings whom he missed most, Marie-Louise and his son, could have been there to receive his embrace." <sup>46</sup>*

Note for the Duke of Vicence<sup>47</sup>

Paris, May 1815

It is possible for the Chamber to make a motion in favor of the King of Rome in order to make known the horror that the behavior of Austria should inspire. That would be very effective.

Méneval should make a report dated the day after his arrival. He will make known the behavior displayed by Austria and the other powers toward the Empress from Orleans to the time he left Vienna: the violation of the treaty of Fontainebleau, since the Empress, along with her son, were torn away from the Emperor. Méneval will highlight the indignation shown by my son's grandmother, the Queen of Sicily, in Vienna, regarding this state of affairs. He should emphasize especially the separation of the Imperial prince from his mother and from Madame de Montesquiou, the young prince's tears upon leaving her, and the fears of Madame de Montesquiou relative to the safety and very existence of the young prince. Méneval will treat this last point appropriately.

<sup>45</sup> *Correspondance*, vol. 27, letter 21651.

<sup>46</sup> In J. Collin de Plancy, *La vie et les légendes intimes des deux empereurs, Napoléon I et Napoléon II jusqu'à Napoléon III*, Paris: Henri Plon, 1837, p 349.

<sup>47</sup> *Correspondance*, vol. 28 (March 1, 1815 - August 4, 1815), letters 21996, 22063. Both letters bear the mention: according to the copy. Letter 21996 is from the Foreign Affairs Archives, letter 22063 is from the Justice Archives.

He will speak of the pain the Empress endured when she was torn away from the Emperor. She did not sleep for 30 days while His Majesty was being shipped away. He will stress that the Empress is truly a prisoner, not permitted to write to the Emperor and made to swear on her honor never to write a word to him.

Méneval will include in this report all the appropriate and vivid details he gave to the Emperor.

*By June 22, 1815, Napoleon had signed an abdication in favor of his son. There appears to have been no further exchanges with his wife (though Doctor O'Meara would have been entrusted with a letter for Marie-Louise in 1818).*

Declaration to the French people

Fellow Frenchmen, by starting a war to maintain national independence, I was counting on rallying all the efforts, all the goodwill, and all the help of the national authorities. I was well founded to hope for success and I had withstood all the declarations from foreign powers against me.

Circumstances seem to have changed.

I offer myself as a sacrifice to the hatred of the enemies of France. May they be sincere in their declarations and be after me only!

My political life is over, and I proclaim my son Emperor of the French, under the title of Napoleon II.

The current Ministers will form a provisional government. The interest I take in my son incites me to invite the Chambers to organize without delay the regency by law.

Unite for public safety and in order to remain an independent nation.

At the Palais of Elysée, June 22, 1815

Napoleon

*When the two Chambers have sent a delegation to Napoleon to thank him for his abdication, Napoleon responded:*

*"Whatever my position, I will always be well if France is happy. I entrust my son to France; I hope she will not forget that I abdicated in his favor only. I have also made this great sacrifice for the good of the nation: it is with my dynasty alone that it can hope to be free, happy, and independent." <sup>48</sup>*

*The government ended up betraying Napoleon, handing Paris over to the Allies on July 8, as Louis XVIII moved back into the capital. In the meantime, the Congress of Vienna ceded the tiny Italian Duchy of Parma-Guastalla to Marie-Louise. During Napoleon's exile on St. Helena (which he reached on October 26, 1815), no epistolary exchanges were allowed with his family and no contact was ever made between him and Marie-Louise or their son.*

<sup>48</sup> *La Vie*, p 362.

## Napoleon on St. Helena

*We jump ahead to the Fall of 1816 and Emmanuel de Las Cases's account of some of the instances in which Napoleon referred to his son. Las Cases (1766-1842), Chamberlain to Napoleon, had followed the fallen Emperor in his exile to St. Helena. When Napoleon decided to write his memoirs, Las Cases volunteered his services as historiographer and for thirteen months engaged Napoleon in conversations that would become part of the Mémorial de St Hélène.*

Monday, September 23, 1816  
On sensitivity.<sup>49</sup>

In the morning, the Emperor, after discussing many topics, came to talk about feelings, sensations, and sensitivity. Pointing out one of us who, he had observed, never pronounced the name of his mother without tears in his eyes, he said: "But isn't this particular to him? Or is this a general feeling? Are we all the same or am I an exception to the rule? For me, I certainly love my mother with all my heart. There is nothing I would not do for her; yet if I learned of her death, I do not think I could express my sorrow by even one tear. But I do not maintain that it would be the same if I were to lose a friend, my wife, or my son. Is this difference founded in nature? What caused it? Would it not be that reason prepared me beforehand for the loss of my mother since it is in the natural order of things, whereas the death of my wife or my son is a surprise, a harshness of fate against which I must struggle?"

*In the words of Las Cases:*

It is certain that he dearly loved his wife and son. People who served in his household are now telling us how much he gave himself over to his feelings toward his family, and they point out to us nuances of his character that we had previously been far from suspecting. He sometimes held his son in his arms with effusiveness. But more often, he expressed his tenderness with teasing and tricks. If he met his son in the gardens, he would throw him on the ground or knock over his toys. His son was brought to him at lunch everyday, and he never missed the opportunity to smear him with everything on the table within his reach.

Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1816:

"What education will they give him?" he would ask. "With what principles will they nourish his childhood? Oh, if he should have a weak mind! If he should take after the Royalists! If they should inspire in him a horror of his father! This idea makes me tremble!" he would observe painfully. "And yet, what could be the antidote for this? From now on, there can be no reliable go-between, no faithful tradition between him and me. At the very most, my Memoirs and perhaps also your journal will one day be in his hands. But overcoming the false precepts and the impulses of childhood and counteracting the vices of one's entourage takes a certain capacity, a certain strength of

<sup>49</sup> Mémorial, pp 1277-1278.

mind, a sharp and decisive judgment. Are these qualities easily found?" He looked deeply troubled. "But, let us talk of something else," he insisted, and yet he spoke of nothing else.

*Napoleon asks Las Cases the following:*

If, one day, you should see my wife and son, embrace them: for the last two years I have had no news about them, whether directly or indirectly.<sup>50</sup> ( . . . )  
Longwood, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1816

"your devoted: Napoleon"

*Dated July 25, 1818, the following is an account by Doctor O'Meara, Napoleon's physician, of his last encounter with Napoleon on St. Helena. Napoleon here shows himself eager to get O'Meara to counter some of the slander published about him. He is especially concerned about what his family will hear. Back in England, O'Meara publishes an incendiary pamphlet against the way in which Sir Hudson Lowe, the governor at St. Helena, is treating Napoleon.*

Last recommendations<sup>51</sup>

July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1818

"When you arrive in Europe, you will either go to my brother Joseph yourself or send for him. You will tell him that I would like him to return to you the packet I left in his care in Rochefort. It contains private and confidential letters written to me by the Emperors Alexander and Francis, the King of Prussia, and other sovereigns of Europe. You will publish them to shame these sovereigns and reveal to the world the vile homage these vassals would pay me when asking favors or supplicating me for their thrones. When I was strong and in power, they would fight for my protection and the honor of my alliance; they groveled at my feet. Now that I am defeated, they basely oppress me, and keep me separated from my wife and child. I beg you to do what I am asking; and if you see being published any slander against me concerning what took place while you were with me, please take the occasion to say, 'I have seen with my own eyes that this is not the truth.'"

He begged me, upon my arrival in Europe, to inquire about his family and to tell them that he did not wish for any of them to come to St. Helena to be witnesses of the misfortunes and humiliations he was experiencing. "You will express the feelings that I have for them," he added; "be the interpreter of my affection to my dear Louise, my wonderful mother, and Pauline."<sup>52</sup> If you see my son, embrace him for me; let him never

<sup>50</sup> Mémorial, p.1590. This letter bore the inscription: "three or four lines are missing here." However, the quote that follows was given in a note: "There has been in this country, for six months now, a German Botanist who saw them in the garden of Schoenbrunn, a few months before his departure. The barbarians made sure that he would not come and give me any news concerning them." (Las Cases)—ed.

<sup>51</sup> Oeuvres de Napoléon Ier à Sainte-Hélène, vol. 32 of Correspondance. pp. 416-417.

<sup>52</sup> Pauline, 1780-1825, was Napoleon's favorite sister. A woman of great beauty, she was the subject of considerable scandal. She accompanied her husband, General Leclerc, on the expedition to Haiti. After Leclerc's death, Napoleon arranged her marriage (1803) to Camillo Borghese, a member of the Roman nobility. They soon separated, however. Pauline, made Princess of Guastalla in 1806, fell into temporary

forget that he was born a French prince. Express to Lady Holland the feelings that I have regarding her kindness and the esteem I have for her. Finally, try to send me some accurate information concerning the manner in which my son is being brought up.”

The Emperor then shook my hand and embraced me, saying: “Goodbye O’Meara; we will not see each other again. Be Happy!”

### **Napoleon’s Final Words for his Son**

*The following document, found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (ref. 0-LB45-528), bears no date and appears to be a letter Napoleon addressed to his son warning him not to follow his example.*

Letter of Napoleon Bonaparte, addressed to his son, concerning the Archduchess Marie-Louise.

It is preceded by his declaration to the French people on his past conduct.<sup>53</sup>

(...) The Archduchess Marie-Louise consented to give me her hand. Certainly, for a man who owned nothing, this represented a great feat and brought me much glory. It was expected that I would set aside my warrior spirit.

But divine providence had decided in its wisdom that I should serve as an example to all those with ambitious futures, by showing them that we lose ourselves sooner or later once we stray from the right path.

It is for you, my son, that I have done this little piece of work; for you, and not in order to answer to the countless diatribes that are spread about me every day; it is particularly for you that I did it, so that you will be made modest by my vanity, careful by my ambition, and, finally, happy by my misfortunes.

Know that, when we possess a good heart, we always repent for having done wrong, but never boast for having done good, not even to an ingrate.

You are young; get used to making people happy without extravagance; but flee the flatterers, who will never fail to lead you to your downfall.

May your hand never pay back a compliment, since it will have been given only in the interest of the one who spoke it.

Instead, excuse the apparent insult of the one who will brutally tell you the truth, rather than lend an ear to the one who, by pretending always to agree with you, would leave you in error.

You owe to the generosity of those I name my enemies a principality vast enough for a wise man, and populated enough for a brave man; for true bravery does not consist in making millions of men go to battle, but in defending one’s cause oneself, when it is legitimate.

Honor, respect, and love your mother; always consider that it is to her that you

owe a new heritage, since your father had the misfortune of losing yours.

If fate makes you a warrior--something that, for your happiness, I do not wish upon you--undertake only what is legitimate and prudent, and you will always be sure of victory.

Farewell, my son; always have your father’s example in mind; imitate whatever you find good in him; but beware of his follies, and his unquenchable thirst for war.

*The following excerpts from Napoleon’s testament concerning his son provide us with a keen sense of Napoleon’s wish to leave his son a legacy. The objects passed on to the son, from paintings, to books, to personal and military memorabilia, are clearly meant to rekindle in the son the memory of his father.*

Testament<sup>54</sup>

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1821, Longwood  
Island of St. Helena

This is my testament or act of my last will

(...)

3. I can only praise my very dear wife, Marie-Louise; I will have for her the most tender feelings right up to my very last moment. I beseech her to be careful to protect my son from the traps that still surround his childhood.

4. I ask my son never to forget that he was born a French Prince, and never to let himself become an instrument in the hands of the triumvirate that oppresses the nations of Europe. He must never battle or harm France in any way. He must adopt my motto: “Everything for the people of France.”

(...)

II

1. I bequeath to my son the boxes, orders, and other objects such as silver plates, my field bed, weapons, saddles, spurs, vases from my chapel, books, linen, which I have worn and used, according to the list affixed (A): I hope that these small legacies will be valuable to him by bringing to his mind the memory of a father about whom the universe will tell him.

I appoint Counts Montholon, Bertrand, and Marchand the executors of my will.

This present will, written entirely by my own hand, is signed and sealed with my coat of arms.

Napoleon

disfavor with her brother because of her hostility to Empress Marie-Louise. But when Napoleon's fortune took a turn for the worse, Pauline showed herself more loyal than any of his other sisters and brothers.

<sup>53</sup>Napoleon (Bibliothèque Nationale 9-LB45-528 (A)) -- not dated (From the press of J. M. Eberhart).

<sup>54</sup>*Oeuvres de Napoléon Ier à Sainte-Hélène*, vol.32 of *Correspondance*. The testament is reproduced according to the original, kept in the Archives of the Empire.



List A (affixed to my will)

(...)

2. Marchand will save my hair and have made bracelets of it with little gold clasps, to be sent to the Empress Marie-Louise, to my mother, and to each of my brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, the cardinal, and one of larger size to my son.

(...)

Inventory of my personal effects to be kept by Marchand and given to my son:

My silver dressing-box, the one on my table, containing all its toiletries, razors, etc; my alarm clock; it is the alarm clock of Frederic II, which I took at Potsdam (in the box marked # III); my two watches, with the chain of the Empress' hair, and a chain of my own hair for the other watch; Marchand will have them made in Paris; my two wax seals (the one from France is enclosed in box # III); the small gold clock that is now in my sleeping quarters; my wash basin, the water bowl as well as its stand; my night stands, the ones that I used in France, and my silver gilt bidet; my two iron beds, my mattresses and blankets, if they can be preserved; my three silver decanters, which held my eau-de-vie and which my *chasseurs*<sup>55</sup> carried to the battle-field; my French telescope; my spurs (two pairs); three mahogany boxes (numbers I, II, III), containing my snuff-boxes and some other things, including a silver gilt dish.

Body linen: 6 shirts; 6 handkerchiefs; 6 ties; 6 napkins; 6 pairs of silk stockings; 4 black collars; 6 pairs of socks; 2 pairs of cambric bed sheets; 2 pillow cases; 2 dressing gowns; 2 pairs of night drawers; 1 pair of suspenders; 4 pairs of white cashmere underpants and jacket; 6 madras; 6 flannel vests; 4 pairs of briefs; 6 pairs of gloves; 1 small box of tobacco, 1 gold neck-buckle; 1 pair of gold buckles; 1 pair of gold shoe buckles, (these last three items can be found in the little box marked # III).

Clothes: 1 *chasseurs* uniform, 1 grenadier uniform, 1 national guard uniform; 2 hats; 1 gray and green hooded cloak; 1 blue coat (the one I had in Marengo); 1 small pelisse zibeline jacket; 2 pairs of shoes; 2 pairs of boots; 1 pair of slippers; 6 belts.

Napoleon

List A (Affixed to my will)

Longwood, island of St. Helena, the 15th of April 1821

I

The consecrated vessels that served at my chapel in Longwood: I entrust the Abbé Vignali to keep them, and to give them to my son when he is sixteen years of age.

II

---

<sup>55</sup> Napoleon's cavalry.

My weapons, namely: my sword, the one I carried at Austerlitz, the Sobieske saber; my dagger, my sword, my hunting knife, my two pairs of pistols from Versailles.

My gold traveling box, the one that I used on the mornings of Ulm, Austerlitz, Iena, Eylau, Friedland, the isle of Lobau, the Moscovia, Montmirail; because of that I hope that it will be precious to my son; Count Bertrand has been its trustee since 1814: I entrust Count Bertrand to look after and take care of these objects, and to give them to my son when he is sixteen years of age.

III

Three little mahogany chests, the first containing thirty-three snuff-boxes or candy dishes; the second, twelve boxes with the Imperial arms, two small eye-glasses and four boxes found on the table of Louis XVIII, at the Tuileries, the 20th of March 1815; the third, three snuff-boxes decorated with silver medals, intended for the Emperor, and various toiletries, in accordance with the lists numbered I, II, III; the field bed I used in all my campaigns; my war telescope; my dressing box, one of each of my uniforms, a dozen of my shirts, and a complete set of each of my clothes and generally everything that is part of my toiletries; my sink; a small clock that is in my bedroom at Longwood; my two watches and the chain of hair of the Empress: I entrust Marchand, my first valet, to keep these objects, and to give them to my son when he is sixteen years of age.

IV

My cabinet of medals; my silver and my Sèvres china, which I used in St. Helena (lists B and C): I entrust Count Montholon to keep these objects, and to give them to my son when he is sixteen years of age.

V

My three saddles and bridles, the spurs that served me at St. Helena. My five hunting guns: I entrust my huntsman Noverraz to keep these objects, and to give them to my son when he is sixteen years of age.

VI

Four hundred volumes chosen from my library among those which have been most useful to me: I entrust Saint-Denis to keep them, and to give them to my son when he is sixteen years of age.

List B

Inventory of the effects that I left in possession of Monsieur the Count of Turrene.

(...)

I give to my son: the Sobieski saber, the collar of the Legion of honor, the silver gilt sword, the consular sword, the iron sword, the collar of the golden fleece, the hat and fur hat of Henri IV; the gold *nécessaire* containing dental care utensils, which is still at the dentists.

(...)

This is my testament, written entirely by my own hand.

Napoleon

Instructions for the executors of my will.

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1821 Longwood

(...)

14. I have with Denon and with Albe a large quantity of plans and maps that belong to me, seeing that I paid for several years 10,000 to 20,000 francs per month for the sketching and manufacturing of these plans and drawings: get them to give you a list and have them brought to my son.

15. I wish for the executors of my will to gather the engravings, paintings, books and medals that may give to my son the right ideas, and destroy the false ideas that foreign politics might have wanted instilled in him, so that he is able to see things for what they are. When printing my campaigns of Italy and of Egypt, along with any of my manuscripts, you will dedicate them to my son, as well as the letters from sovereigns, if you find them; you should be able to obtain them from the Archives; this should not be difficult, since national pride would greatly benefit from it.

16. If we can get a collection of the reproductions of my headquarters that were at Fontainebleau, as well as the views of my palaces of France and Italy, you will make a collection for my son.

17. Constant stole a lot from me at Fontainebleau; I believe that from him and Roustan you could get a lot of precious things for my son, which for them have only a material value.

18. In my small apartments at the top of the Tuileries there were a large number of chairs made by Josephine and Marie-Louise that could be pleasing to my son.

19. When my executors are able to see my son, they will vigorously reform his ideas regarding the facts and put him on the right path.

(...)

21. Without wishing that my mother, if she is not already dead, give by her will advantages to my son, whom I suppose to be richer than most of her other children, I do wish that she favor him by certain precious legacies, such as a portrait of her, of my father, or a few jewels, so that he can say that he has something of his grandparents to hold on to.

22. As soon as my son is old enough to think for himself, my mother, brothers, and sisters must write him and reestablish family ties, however many obstacles the House of Austria creates. Austria will be powerless at that point to misrepresent facts since my son will know them for himself.

23. I would be happy to see the kin of my officers and servants put themselves into the service of my son, either the children of Bertrand or those of Montholon, or...

24. As soon as my son is old enough and it is convenient, urge him to take up again the name Napoleon.

One can find many things at Denon's, Albe's, Fain's, Méneval's, and Bourrienne's that would greatly interest my son.

(...)

31. At the home of Appiani, a painter in Milan, a lot of important things for my son can be found. My memory will be the glory of his life, so gather up for him, purchase, or facilitate the purchase of whatever could surround him and remind him of me.

32. If there is a reversal of fortune and my son regains the throne, it would be for the executors of my will to present him with all I owe my old officers, soldiers, and faithful servants.

33. Through letters and, when the opportunities arise, visits, keep the Empress Marie-Louise aware of the loyalty, esteem, and feelings that I have had for her, and entrust to her always my son, who has resources only from her side.

(...)

35. I wish the executors of my will to assemble the drawings that most resemble me in various outfits and send them to my son as soon as they can.

36. My nanny in Ajaccio has children and grandchildren. My good fortune has been able to contribute to their good upbringing; the Austrian authorities will not be suspicious of them; try to put one or more in the service of my son. I imagine she is dead. But if this is not the case, I suspect she is very rich. If, however, by some turn of fate, all that I did for her had not turned out well, my executors shall not let her live in misery.

(...)

These are the instructions for Montholon, Bertrand, and Marchand, the executors of my will.

I have made a will and seven codicils of which Marchand is the depository.  
Napoleon. April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1821

*This final document, dated April 17, 1821, contains Napoleon's last recommendations to his son as recounted by Las Cases. In this plea for peace, Napoleon advises his son that should he ever regain the throne he should marry a Russian princess so as to insure the support of Russia in times of conflict. This was one of the reasons Napoleon himself had married Marie-Louise, even though, as we have seen, such a means of securing alliances ultimately failed him.*

*Napoleon died on May 5, with the funeral taking place on May 10. It is not until July 22, however, that his son learns of his death. He was ten years old at the time; though he had been separated from his father for over seven years and brought up in an atmosphere of hatred for him, he was reportedly heartbroken at the news. Accounts tell us that he was deeply affected his entire life by the tragic turn of events his life had taken and that these events might have contributed to his chronic ill health. Napoleon's son died of*

*pneumonia on July 22, 1832, at the age of 21, on the eleventh anniversary of the day he learned of his father's death.*

*Napoleon's mortal remains were brought to Paris on December 5, 1840. On April 2, 1861, Napoleon's coffin was placed under the Dome of the Invalides. On December 14-15, 1940, a hundred years after his father's remains were brought to the capital of France, the German government allowed for the remains of Napoleon's son, Duke of Reichstadt, formerly King of Rome, to be returned to Paris.*

### Excerpts from Stories of captivity<sup>56</sup>

#### Recommendations from Napoleon to his son (Section II, pages 517-528.)

April 17, 1821

Around three o'clock in the morning the Emperor had me called. When I entered his chambers, he was sitting up, and the fire in his eyes made me fear that his fever had worsened; perceiving my anxiety, he said to me with kindness:

"I am no worse, but I am preoccupied with what the executors of my will should say to my son when they see him. There is nothing worse than honest citizens in times of political crisis, when they have a mind fascinated by false ideas. You will need to recall and gather everything I have told you and dictated to you about the ambition of my reign; but all this might be scattered about in your memory when it needs to be discussed: it is better that I summarize, in a few words, the advice which I pass on to my son; it will be easier for you to detail my thoughts to him. Write:

"My son must not think of avenging my death; he must gain from it. Let the memory of what I have accomplished never abandon him; let him always remain, like me, French to the core. All his efforts must aim to reign by peace. If he should want, out of pure imitation and without absolute necessity, to resume my wars, he would be but a monkey. To redo my work would imply that I did nothing. To complete it, on the other hand, will demonstrate the solidity of its foundation and explain the whole of the edifice, which was only sketched out. One does not do the same thing twice in one century. I was forced to subdue Europe by arms; today it must be convinced. I saved the Revolution, which was perishing; I washed it of its crimes, I showed it to the world radiant with glory. I implanted new ideas in France and in Europe; these ideas will not fade. Let him cultivate what I sowed. Let him develop all the elements of prosperity that the French soil contains. At this price only may he still be a great sovereign.

"The Bourbons<sup>57</sup> will not remain in power. When I am dead, there will be a show of support in my favor everywhere, even in England. This is, for my son, a handsome legacy. It is possible that the English will favor the return of my son to France in order to erase the memory of their persecutions; however, to live on good terms with England, it is necessary to accommodate her commercial interests at all costs. From this necessity come two possibilities: fight England, or share with her the world's commerce. Today the latter is the only solution possible. In France, foreign affairs will prevail for a long

time yet over domestic affairs. I leave my son enough strength and sympathy to continue my work with a refined and conciliatory diplomacy as his only arms. His position in Vienna is deplorable. Will Austria surrender him without conditions? After all, François Ier found himself in a much more critical position; French nationality was not affected by it. Let him never rise to the throne through foreign influence. His objective must not be solely to reign, but rather to merit the approbation of posterity. Let him reacquaint himself with my family when it is possible; my mother is a woman of tradition; Joseph and Eugène can give him good advice; Hortense and Catherine are superior women. Should he remain in exile, let him marry one of my nieces. If France summons him, he should seek a Russian princess; that is the only court where family ties dominate politics. The alliance he shall enter into must endeavor to increase France's influence abroad, not introduce a foreign influence into the government. The French nation is the easiest to govern, so long as it is not rubbed the wrong way; nothing equals its quick and easy understanding; she can discern in an instant those who work for or against her; however, it is always necessary to speak to her senses; if not, her worried mind will eat away at her; she will brood and lose her temper.

"My son will arrive after civil unrest; he has to fear but one sole party, that of the Duke of Orléans; this party has been germinating for some time now. Communicate to him what Bertrand told me on this subject. Let him scorn all parties; let him see only the masses. With the exception of those who betrayed the nation, he must ignore the background of all men and reward talent, merit, and services wherever he should find them. Châteaubriand, despite his criticism, is a good Frenchman.

"France is the country where those in charge have the least influence; to rely on them is like building on sand. Great things can be achieved in France only by relying on the masses. In addition, a government should search for support where it is. There are moral laws as inflexible and as imperious as physical laws. The Bourbons may rely only on the nobles and the priests, whatever the constitution they are made to adopt. With them in power, the troubled waters will return to their former level, in spite of the fact that the machine had been able to raise the country above them for a while. As for me, I addressed everyone's concerns; I set the first example of a government that furthered the interests of all. I did not govern for or with the help of the nobles, priests, bourgeois or artisans; I governed for the whole community, for the entire family of France. To divide the interests of a nation is to do a disservice to the interests of all, and to induce civil war. One does not divide that which by nature is indivisible; doing so just mutilates it. I do not attach any importance to the constitution whose principal foundations I dictated to you: what is good today could be bad tomorrow. Besides, nothing must definitively be settled in this respect without the formal consent of the nation; the guiding principle must be universal suffrage.

"My nobility will be of no support to my son; it took me more than one generation for it to take my color, for it to conserve by tradition the sacred deposit of all my moral conquests. As early as 1815, all the great leaders openly opposed me. I could count on neither my marshals nor my nobility, not even on the colonels. However, all the people and all the army, up through the rank of captain, were behind me. My faith in them did not betray me. They owe me a lot; I was their true representative. My dictatorship was absolutely necessary, and the proof is that they always offered me more power than I even wanted. Today in France, only what is necessary is possible. It will not be the same

<sup>56</sup> *Oeuvres de Napoléon I à Sainte-Hélène*, vol. 32 of *Correspondance*.

<sup>57</sup> Name of the royal family ruling in France from 1589-1793; 1814-1848, and from 1830-1848 as the Orléans branch.

for my son: his power will be disputed; he must anticipate all the wishes for freedom. Moreover it is easier, in ordinary times, to reign with the help of Chambers rather than alone: assemblies take a large part of your responsibility, and nothing is easier than always having the majority for yourself: however, one should be careful not to demoralize the country. Government has an immense influence in France: if he really knows how to deal with them, he will not need to corrupt in order to find support everywhere. The goal of a sovereign must be not only to reign, but to promote education, morals, and well-being. All that is false is of no help.

“When I was young, I had illusions; but I quickly cast them aside. The great orators who dominate the assemblies by the brilliance of their words are, in general, the most mediocre of politicians: one should not fight them with words, for they will always have retorts grander than yours; one should oppose their loquaciousness with unyielding and logical reasoning, for their strength lies in vagueness. It is necessary to bring them back to the reality of facts, for the practical kills them. At the *Conseil d’Etat*, there were men much more eloquent than I; yet I always defeated them with this simple argument: two plus two equals four.

“France is overflowing with very capable and practical men; the main thing is to find them and give them the means to succeed. One man is now at the plough who should be at *Conseil d’Etat*; one man is a minister who should be at the plough. Let my son not be surprised to see people who seem to be most reasonable propose the most absurd plans to him, from the agrarian law right up to the despotism of the Great Turk<sup>58</sup>; all systems will find their apologists in France. Let him listen to everything while assessing what is truly worthy in it; let him surround himself with all the genuine capacities of the country.

“The French people have two equally powerful passions that seem conflicting but that nevertheless derive from the same sentiment: the love of equality and the love of distinctions. A government can satisfy these two needs only by an extreme justice. The law and actions of the government must be equal for all: honors and rewards must be attributed to those men who, in the eyes of all, seem the most worthy. One pardons the worthy, not the scheming. The *Légion d’honneur*<sup>59</sup> was an immense and powerful instrument to reward virtue, talent, and bravery. Ill-used, it would be a plague: one would alienate the whole army if the spirit of the court or of the cliques guided its choices and its administration.

“My son will be obliged to reign with the freedom of the press; it is a necessity today. Governing is not a question of following some more or less sound theory; it is a question of building with the materials one has at hand. One must endure the necessities and find ways to take advantage of them. The freedom of the press must, in the hands of the government, become a powerful auxiliary to spread sound doctrines and good principles to all corners of the Empire. To leave it to itself would be to fall asleep right beside a great danger. If we had had general peace, I would have instituted a Ministry of the Press, comprised of the most capable men in the country, and I would have had my ideas and intentions sent out all the way to the very last hamlet. These days it is

<sup>58</sup> Napoleon is probably referring to the Ottoman Sultan at the Sublime Porte in Istanbul/Constantinople.

<sup>59</sup> *Légion d’honneur*: created by Napoléon Bonaparte in 1802, the *Légion d’honneur* is a prestigious order awarded for either civil or military merit. The order is divided into five ranks, in ascending order: chevalier, officier, commandeur, grand officier, and officier-croix (Collins-Robert French Dictionary).

impossible to remain, as was the case three hundred years ago, a quiet spectator of the transformation of societies. One must, at the risk of death, either run everything, or prevent everything.

“My son must be the man of the new ideas and of the cause I made victorious everywhere. To regenerate the people through the kings; to establish everywhere institutions that eradicate the traces of feudalism, that assure the dignity of man, and develop the seeds of prosperity dormant for centuries; to share amongst the majority what is today the privilege of the few; to unite Europe with indissoluble federative bonds; to propagate in all parts of the world that are today barbaric and uneducated the benefits of Christianity and civilization; such must be the aim of all my son’s thoughts; such is the cause for which I die a martyr. Against the oligarchs’ hatred of me, let him measure the sanctity of my cause! See the regicides: they were formerly in the counsel of a Bourbon; they will return tomorrow to their homeland; and my people and I are paying dearly through tortures for the benefits I wanted to give to the nations. My enemies are the enemies of humanity; they want to enslave the people, whom they consider to be a herd; they want to oppress France, to force the river to return to its source: let them be careful that it does not overflow! With my son, opposing interests can live in peace, and new ideas can spread, gather strength without setbacks and without victims; humanity would be spared enormous misfortunes. But, if the blind hatred of kings still pursues my blood after my death, then I shall be avenged, and cruelly so; if the people go wild, civilization will lose in all respects; blood shall be shed throughout all of Europe; the lights will disappear in the midst of civil and foreign wars; more than three hundred years of turmoil will be needed in order to destroy the royal authority in Europe,<sup>60</sup> which only recently began representing the interests of all, and which took several centuries to come out of the grips of the Middle Ages. If, to the contrary, the North advances against civilization, the struggle will be less lengthy, though the blows more deadly. The well-being of the people, and all the results obtained over the years, shall be lost, and no one can foresee the disastrous consequences. Like the kings, the people would be well-served by the accession of my son. Apart from the ideas and the principles for which we have fought, and which I made victorious, I see nothing but slavery or confusion for France and for Europe.

“You will publish all that I have dictated or written, and you will encourage my son to read and meditate upon it. You will tell him to protect all those who have been of good service to me, and the number is great. My poor soldiers, so magnanimous, so devoted, are perhaps without bread! What courage, what good sense the French people have! What buried treasure, which will perhaps never again see the light of day!

“Europe is heading towards an inevitable transformation: to delay it is to weaken us by a useless struggle; to encourage it is to strengthen the hopes and wishes of all. There are desires of nationality that need to be satisfied sooner or later, and it is toward this goal that one must advance.

“My son’s position shall not be exempt from great difficulties. Let him, through the consent of all, do what circumstances obliged me to do through military force. Conqueror of Russia in 1812, the problem of a hundred year peace was resolved; I was

<sup>60</sup> The King of Rome.

All of a sudden, the Emperor felt unable to continue; his voice faltered and I was so frightened looking at him that I implored him to suspend his dictation.

cutting the Gordian knot<sup>61</sup> of the people; these days it must be untied. The memory of the thrones that I established in the interest of my general policy must be set aside. In 1815, I had already required from my brothers that they forget their monarchy and accept only the title of French prince. My son must follow this example, because the opposite would induce justifiable alarm. It is no longer in the North that serious questions will be resolved; it is in the Mediterranean: here, there is much to satisfy all the ambitions of the various powers, and with scraps of untoiled land one can buy the happiness of civilized people. Let the kings listen to reason: in Europe there will be no more substance to fuel international hatred. Prejudices are dispersed, spread out, and then merge; the roads of commerce are multiplying; it is no longer possible for one nation to maintain a monopoly over them.

“In order for my son to know if his administration is good or bad, if his laws are in accordance with mores, an annual report detailing the condemnations of the courts should be presented to him. If crimes or offenses are on the rise, it is proof that poverty is increasing, that society is poorly governed; their reduction is proof of the contrary.

“Religious ideas are more powerful than certain narrow-minded philosophers would believe; they can be of great service to humanity. Even nowadays, being on good terms with the Pope allows one to rule over the conscience of a hundred million men. Pius VII will always be well disposed to my son; he is an old man full of tolerance and insight. Fatal circumstances have embroiled our cabinets; I deeply regret this. Fesch did not understand me; he supported the ultramontanists<sup>62</sup>, the enemies of true religion in France.

“If they allow you to come back to France, you shall find many men still faithful to my memory. The most beautiful memorial that they could erect for me would be to compile in one body of work all the thoughts that I put forth to the *Conseil d'Etat* concerning the administration of the Empire; compile all my instructions for my Ministries, and make a list of all the work I undertook, of all the monuments I erected in France and in Italy. Maret, Daru, Mollien, Merlin, and Cambacérès can contribute to this work; this shall be the complement to what I charged Bignon to write about my foreign policy and to what the generals I indicated to you will write about my wars. It will be necessary to differentiate, in all that I said at the *Conseil d'Etat*, between those measures that were good for the moment and those whose application is eternally true.

“Let my son read about and meditate often on History; this is the only true philosophy. Let him read and meditate upon the wars of the great captains; this is the only way to learn warfare.

“However, all that you will tell him, all that he will learn, will serve him little if he does not have, at the bottom of his heart that sacred fire, that love of the good that alone leads to great things.

“But I hope that he shall be worthy of his destiny.

“If they do not let you go to Vienna...”

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<sup>61</sup> From a Greek legend: a knot tied by King Gordius of Phrygia, which an oracle said would be undone only by the future master of Asia; Alexander the Great, failing to untie it, cut the knot with his sword. The expression "to cut the Gordian knot" is thus used to refer to a difficult situation that is resolved by quick and decisive action (The Internet: [www.alt.xmission.com/~gordian/gordian.knot.html](http://www.alt.xmission.com/~gordian/gordian.knot.html)).

<sup>62</sup> *Ultramonianist*: a party that advocates the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal supremacy. Webster's New World College Dictionary.