


NAPOLEON III

 **H**ARLES LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, second French Emperor, was born at Paris, April 20, 1808, and died at Chiselhurst, England, Jan. 9, 1873. He was the reputed son of Louis Napoleon, king of Holland, and Hortense, step-daughter of Napoleon I. From his birth he was looked upon as the second heir of the empire, and Napoleon took interest in his education even after the birth of the King of Rome. After Waterloo, his mother having been exiled from France, he was brought up at Geneva, Switzerland, as well as at Augsburg, his mother's residence at Arenenberg, and at Rome. His military education he received at Constance, where he studied engineering, history, physics, and chemistry. In 1831, with his elder brother, Louis, he set out to assist the Romagna in its revolt against the Pope. The death of Louis in this expedition, followed by that of the Duke of Reichstadt (1832), made him the head of the Napoleonic dynasty. He returned to Paris with his mother, but, owing to a demonstration by the people on the anniversary of the death of Napoleon, Louis Philippe insisted on their departure and they proceeded to England. In 1832, he accepted the mission of leading the Polish insurrection and actually set out for the border, but the fall of Warsaw changed his plans. He returned to Switzerland and employed himself in the composition of various works. In recognition of his work on Switzerland, published in 1833, he was proclaimed a citizen of the Swiss republic. In 1835, he issued a "Manual of Artillery" which brought him into notice in military circles. During the five years that followed, he made two attempts to gain the throne of France, but both were failures. For the latter of these he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment; but in 1846 he managed to escape and returned to England. In 1848, he was elected deputy for Paris and three other departments, and in September he was made President of the republic. In December, 1851, by force of arms, he dissolved the constitution and was reelected President for ten years. He then declared his design to restore the monarchy and assumed the title of Emperor. Among the chief events of his reign were the annexation of Savoy and Nice, the beautifying of Paris under the architect Baron Haussman, the great Paris exposition, and his taking part with the Allies in the Crimean War. He wrote the "Life of Cæsar" as a veiled defence of his political measures. In 1870, suspecting that the enthusiasm of his army was beginning to wane and desiring to rekindle its ardor, he declared war against Prussia, but, though he assumed the chief command, he failed to cross the Rhine, and after a disastrous campaign, was forced to surrender at Sedan, Sept. 2, 1870. In the following March he was allowed to join his wife, the Empress Eugenie, at Chiselhurst, England, where he resided till his death. Louis Napoleon, who was a nephew of Bonaparte, the first emperor, was in private, a kindly and amiable man, too much given to heed the councils of the clerical party at court and without any strong and capable advisers. He was a thinker and man of letters rather than a statesman, and "presuming on the accident of birth to seize absolute power, and to direct the affairs of a great nation, he proved himself totally incapable as an administrator, and allowed office, political and military, to fall into the most unfit hands."

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SPEECH IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

OF my sentiments or of my opinions I shall not speak; I have already set them before you, and no one as yet has had reason to doubt my word. As to my parliamentary conduct, I will say that as I never permit myself the liberty of bringing any of my colleagues to an account for the course which he thinks proper to pursue, so, in like manner, I never recognize in him the right to call me to an account for mine; this account I owe only to my constituents.

Of what am I accused? Of accepting from the popular sentiment a nomination after which I have not sought. Well! I accept this nomination that does me so much honor; I accept it, because three successive elections and the unanimous decree of the National Assembly, reversing the proscriptions against my family, authorize me to believe that France regards the name I bear to be serviceable for the consolidation of society, now shaken to its foundations,—and for the establishment and prosperity of the Republic.

How little do those who charge me with ambition know my heart! If an imperative duty did not keep me here, if the sympathy of my fellow citizens did not console me for the violence of the attacks of some, and even for the impetuosity of the defences of others, long since would I have regretted my exile.

I am reproached for my silence! Few persons here are gifted with the faculty of eloquent speech, obedient to just and sound ideas. But is there only one way to serve our country? What she wants most of all is acts; what she wants is a government, firm, intelligent, and wise, more desirous to

heal the evils of society than to avenge them—a government that would openly set itself at the head of just ideas, and thus repel a thousand times more effectually than with bayonets those theories which are not founded on experience and reason.

I know that parties intend to set my path with pits and snares; but I shall not fall into them. I shall always follow in my own way the course which I have traced out, without troubling myself or stopping to see who is pleased. Nothing shall interrupt my tranquillity, nothing shall induce me to forget my duty. I have but one aim; it is to merit the esteem of the Assembly, and with this esteem, that of all good men, and the confidence of that magnanimous people that was made so light of here yesterday.

I declare, then, to those who may be willing to organize a system of provocation against me that henceforward I shall reply to no questioning, to no species of attack, to none who would have me speak when I prefer to be silent. Strong in the approval of my conscience, I shall remain immovable amidst all attacks, impassable towards all calumnies.

FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS AS PRESIDENT

CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES,—The suffrages of the nation and the oath which I have taken command my future conduct. My duty is marked out; I shall fulfil it as a man of honor.

I shall treat as enemies of the country all those who may attempt to change, by illegal means, what entire France has established.

Between you and me, citizen representatives, no real dissensions should exist; our wills, our desires are the same.

I wish, like you, to place society on its bases, to strengthen democratic institutions, and to try every means to relieve the sufferings of the generous and intelligent people that has just given me such a splendid mark of confidence.

The majority which I have obtained not only fills me with gratitude, but it shall impart to the new government the moral force without which there is no authority.

With the re-establishment of peace and order our country can arise, heal her wounds, collect her stray children, and calm her passions.

Animated with this conciliatory spirit, I have called around me men of honesty, talent, and patriotism, fully assured that, notwithstanding the differences of their political origin, they are determined to co-operate harmoniously with you in applying the constitution to the perfection of the laws, to the glory of the Republic.

The new administration in entering on business must thank its predecessor for its efforts to transmit the power intact, and to maintain public tranquillity.

The conduct of the honorable General Cavaignac has been worthy of the loyalty of his character and of that sentiment of duty which is the first qualification of the head of a State.

We have, citizen representatives, a great mission to fulfil; it is to found a republic for the interest of all, and a government just, firm, and animated with a sincere love of progress without being either reactionary or Utopian.

Let us be men of the country, not men of a party, and with the assistance of God we shall accomplish useful if not great things.

ADDRESS TO THE FRENCH LEGISLATURE

DELIVERED JANUARY 18, 1858

I HAVE not accepted the honors of the nation with the aim of acquiring an ephemeral popularity, but in hope of deserving the approbation of posterity as the founder of established order. And I declare to you to-day, notwithstanding all that has been said on the contrary, that the future perils of your country will not arise from the excessive prerogatives of the throne, but from the absence of repressive laws. Thus the last elections, despite their satisfactory results, offered in some districts a sad spectacle. Hostile parties availed themselves of that opportunity to create disturbances; and some men even avowed themselves as the enemies of our national institutions, deceived the electors by false promises, and after gaining their suffrages, rejected them with disdain. You will never allow such a scandal to occur again; and you will hereafter compel all the eligible to take the oath to the constitution before presenting themselves as candidates for office.

The tranquillizing of the public mind has been the aim of our constant efforts, and you will aid me in seeking means for reducing the factious opposition to silence. Is it not painful to witness, in a country peaceful and prosperous at home, and respected abroad, one party decrying the government to which it is indebted for the security it enjoys, while another exerts its political liberty to undermine the existing institutions?

I offer a hearty welcome to all those who recognize the national will, and I do not inquire into their antecedents.

As for those who have originated disturbances and organized the conspiracies, let them know that their time has gone by!

I cannot close without mentioning that criminal attempt which has been recently made. I thank heaven for the visible protection which it has granted to the Empress and myself; and I deeply deplore that a plan for destroying one life should have ended in the loss of so many. Yet this thwarted scheme can teach us some useful lessons. The recourse to such desperate means is but a proof of the feebleness and impotence of the conspirators. And again, there never was an assassination which served the interests of the men who armed the murderer. Neither the party that struck Cæsar, nor that which slew Henry IV, profited by their overthrow. God sometimes permits the death of the just, but he never allows the triumph of the evil agent. Thus these attempts neither disturb my security in the present nor my trust in the future. If I live, the Empire lives with me; if I fall, the Empire will be strengthened by my death, for the indignation of the people and of the army will be a new support for the throne of my son.

Let us face the future with confidence, and calmly devote ourselves to the welfare and to the honor of our country.
Dieu protège la France!