

LOUIS DE BOURRIENNE

MEMOIRS OF NAPOLEON
BONAPARTE — VOLUME
15

Louis Antoine Fauvelet Bourrienne
Memoirs of Napoleon
Bonaparte — Volume 15

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Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte — Volume 15

CHAPTER XI

1815.

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The fulfilment of my prediction was now at hand, for the result of the Battle of Waterloo enabled Louis XVIII. to return to his dominions. As soon as I heard of the King's departure from Ghent I quitted Hamburg, and travelled with all possible haste in the hope of reaching Paris in time to witness his Majesty's entrance. I arrived at St. Denis on the 7th of July, and, notwithstanding the intrigues that were set on foot, I found an immense number of persons assembled to meet the King. Indeed, the place was so crowded that it was with the greatest difficulty I could procure even a little garret for my lodging.

Having resumed my uniform of a captain of the National Guard, I proceeded immediately to the King's palace. The salon was filled with ladies and gentlemen who had come to congratulate the King on his return. At St. Denis I found my family, who, not being aware that I had left Hamburg, were much surprised to see me.

They informed me that the Parisians were all impatient for the return of the King—a fact of which I could judge by the

opposition manifested to the free expression of public feeling. Paris having been declared in a state of blockade, the gates were closed, and no one was permitted to leave the capital, particularly by the Barriere de la Chapelle. It is true that special permission might be obtained, and with tolerable ease, by those who wished to leave the city; but the forms to be observed for obtaining the permission deterred the mass of the people from proceeding to St. Denis, which, indeed, was the sole object of the regulation. As it had been resolved to force Fouche and the tri-coloured cockade upon the King, it was deemed necessary to keep away from his Majesty all who might persuade him to resist the proposed measures. Madame de Bourrienne told me that on her arrival at St. Denis she called upon M. Hue and M. Lefebvre, the King's physician, who both acquainted her with those fatal resolutions. Those gentlemen, however, assured her that the King would resolutely hold out against the tri-coloured cockade, but the nomination of the ill-omened man appeared inevitable.

Fouche Minister of the Police! If, like Don Juan, I had seen a statue move, I could not have been more confounded than when I heard this news. I could not credit it until it was repeated to me by different persons. How; indeed, could I think that at the moment of a reaction the King should have entrusted the most important ministerial department to a man to whose arrest he had a hundred days before attached so much consequence? to a man, moreover, whom Bonaparte had appointed, at Lyons, to fill the same office! This was inconceivable! Thus, in less than twenty-four hours,

the same man had been entrusted to execute measures the most opposite, and to serve interests the most contradictory. He was one day the minister of usurpation, and the next the minister of legitimacy! How can I express what I felt when Fouche took the oath of fidelity to Louis XVIII. when I saw the King clasp in his hands the hands of Fouche! I was standing near M. de Chateaubriand, whose feelings must have been similar to mine, to judge from a passage in his admirable work, 'La Monarchie selon la Charte'. "About nine in the evening," he says, "I was in one of the royal antechambers. All at once the door opened, and I saw the President of the Council enter leaning on the arm of the new minister. Oh, Louis-le-Desire! Oh, my unfortunate master! you have proved that there is no sacrifice which your people may not expect from your paternal heart!"

Fouche was resolved to have his restoration as well as M. de Talleyrand, who had had his the year before; he therefore contrived to retard the King's entry into Paris for four days. The prudent members of the Chamber of Peers, who had taken no part in the King's Government in 1814, were the first to declare that it was for the interest of France to hasten his Majesty's entrance into Paris, in order to prevent foreigners from exercising a sort of right of conquest in a city which was a prey to civil dissension and party influence. Blucher informed me that the way in which Fouche contrived to delay the King's return greatly contributed to the pretensions of the foreigners who, he confessed, were very well pleased to see the population of Paris

divided in opinion, and to hear the alarming cries raised by the confederates of the Faubourgs when the King was already at St. Denis.

I know for a fact that Louis XVIII. wished to have nothing to do with Fouche, and indignantly refused to appoint him when he was first proposed. But he had so nobly served Bonaparte during the Hundred Days that it was necessary he should be rewarded. Fouche, besides, had gained the support of a powerful party among the emigrants of the Faubourg St. Germain, and he possessed the art of rendering himself indispensable. I have heard many honest men say very seriously that to him was due the tranquillity of Paris. Moreover, Wellington was the person by whose influence in particular Fouche was made one of the counsellors of the King. After all the benefits which foreigners had conferred upon us Fouche was indeed an acceptable present to France and to the King.

I was not ignorant of the Duke of Wellington's influence upon the affairs of the second Restoration, but for a long time I refused to believe that his influence should have outweighed all the serious considerations opposed to such a perfect anomaly as appointing Fouche the Minister of a Bourbon. But I was deceived. France and the King owed to him Fouche's introduction into the Council, and I had to thank him for the impossibility of resuming a situation which I had relinquished for the purpose of following the King into Belgium. Could I be Prefect of Police under a Minister whom a short time before I

had received orders to arrest, but who eluded my agents? That was impossible. The King could not offer me the place of Prefect under Fouche, and if he had I could not have accepted it. I was therefore right in not relying on the assurances which had been given me; but I confess that if I had been told to guess the cause why they could not be realised I never should have thought that cause would have been the appointment of Fouche as a Minister of the King of France. At first, therefore, I was of course quite forgotten, as is the custom of courts when a faithful subject refrains from taking part in the intrigues of the moment.

I have already frequently stated my opinion of the pretended talent of Fouche; but admitting his talent to have been as great as was supposed, that would have been an additional reason for not entrusting the general police of the kingdom to him. His principles and conduct were already sufficiently known. No one could be ignorant of the language he held respecting the Bourbons, and in which he indulged as freely after he became the Minister of Louis XVIII. as when he was the Minister of Bonaparte. It was universally known that in his conversation the Bourbons were the perpetual butt for his sarcasms, that he never mentioned them but in terms of disparagement, and that he represented them as unworthy of governing France. Everybody must have been aware that Fouche, in his heart, favoured a Republic, where the part of President might have been assigned to him. Could any one have forgotten the famous postscript he subjoined to a letter he wrote from Lyons to his worthy friend

Robespierre: "To celebrate the fete of the Republic suitably, I have ordered 250 persons to be shot?" And to this man, the most furious enemy of the restoration of the monarchy, was consigned the task of consolidating it for the second time! But it would require another Claudian to describe this new Rufinus!

Fouche never regarded a benefit in any other light than as the means of injuring his benefactor. The King, deceived, like many other persons, by the reputation which Fouche's partisans had conjured up for him, was certainly not aware that Fouche had always discharged the functions of Minister in his own interest, and never for the interest of the Government which had the weakness to entrust him with a power always dangerous in his hands. Fouche had opinions, but he belonged to no party, and his political success is explained by the readiness with which he always served the party he knew must triumph, and which he himself overthrew in its turn. He maintained himself in favour from the days of blood and terror until the happy time of the second Restoration only by abandoning and sacrificing those who were attached to him; and it might be said that his ruling passion was the desire of continual change. No man was ever characterised by greater levity or inconstancy of mind. In all things he looked only to himself, and to this egotism he sacrificed both subjects and Governments. Such were the secret causes of the sway exercised by Fouche during the Convention, the Directory, the Empire, the Usurpation, and after the second return of the Bourbons. He helped to found and to destroy

every one of those successive Governments. Fouche's character is perfectly unique. I know no other man who, loaded with honours, and almost escaping disgrace, has passed through so many eventful periods, and taken part in so many convulsions and revolutions.

On the 7th of July the King was told that Fouche alone could smooth the way for his entrance into Paris, that he alone could unlock the gates of the capital, and that he alone had power to control public opinion. The reception given to the King on the following day afforded an opportunity of judging of the truth of these assertions. The King's presence was the signal for a feeling of concord, which was manifested in a very decided way. I saw upon the boulevards, and often in company with each other, persons, some of whom had resumed the white cockade, while others still retained the national colours, and harmony was not in the least disturbed by these different badges.

Having returned to private life solely on account of Fouche's presence in the Ministry, I yielded to that consolation which is always left to the discontented. I watched the extravagance and inconsistency that were passing around me, and the new follies which were every day committed; and it must be confessed that a rich and varied picture presented itself to my observation. The King did not bring back M. de Blacas. His Majesty had yielded to prudent advice, and on arriving at Mons sent the unlucky Minister as his ambassador to Naples. Vengeance was talked of, and there were some persons inconsiderate enough to wish that

advantage should be taken of the presence of the foreigners in order to make what they termed "an end of the Revolution," as if there were any other means of effecting that object than frankly adopting whatever good the Revolution had produced. The foreigners observed with satisfaction the disposition of these shallow persons, which they thought might be turned to their own advantage. The truth is, that on the second Restoration our pretended allies proved themselves our enemies.

But for them, but for their bad conduct, their insatiable exactions, but for the humiliation that was felt at seeing foreign cannon planted in the streets of Paris, and beneath the very windows of the Palace, the days which followed the 8th of July might have been considered by the Royal Family as the season of a festival. Every day people thronged to the garden of the Tuileries, and expressed their joy by singing and dancing under the King's windows.

This ebullition of feeling might perhaps be thought absurd, but it at least bore evidence of the pleasure caused by the return of the Bourbons.

This manifestation of joy by numbers of persons of both sexes, most of them belonging to the better classes of society, displeased Fouche, and he determined to put a stop to it. Wretches were hired to mingle with the crowd and sprinkle corrosive liquids on the dresses of the females some of them were even instructed to commit acts of indecency, so that all respectable persons were driven from the gardens through the

fear of being injured or insulted: As it was wished to create disturbance under the very eyes of the King, and to make him doubt the reality of the sentiments so openly expressed in his favour, the agents of the Police mingled the cry of "Vive l'Empereur!" with that of "Vive le Roi!" and it happened oftener than once that the most respectable persons were arrested and charged by Fouche's infamous agents with having uttered seditious cries. A friend of mine, whose Royalist opinions were well known, and whose father had been massacred during the Revolution, told me that while walking with two ladies he heard some individuals near him crying out "Vive l'Empereur!" This created a great disturbance. The sentinel advanced to the spot, and those very individuals themselves had the audacity to charge my friend with being guilty of uttering the offensive cry. In vain the bystanders asserted the falsehood of the accusation; he was seized and dragged to the guard-house, and after being detained for some hours he was liberated on the application of his friends. By dint of such wretched manoeuvres Fouche triumphed. He contrived to make it be believed that he was the only person capable of preventing the disorders of which he himself was the sole author: He got the Police of the Tuileries under his control. The singing and dancing ceased, and the Palace was the abode of dulness.

While the King was at St. Denis he restored to General Dessoles the command of the National Guard. The General ordered the barriers to be immediately thrown open. On the day

of his arrival in Paris the King determined, as a principle, that the throne should be surrounded by a Privy Council, the members of which were to be the princes and persons whom his Majesty might appoint at a future period. The King then named his new Ministry, which was thus composed:

Prince Talleyrand, peer of France, President of the Council of Ministers, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Baron Louis, Minister of Finance.

The Duke of Otranto, Minister of the Police.

Baron Pasquier, Minister of Justice, and Keeper of the Seals.

Marshal Gouvion St. Cyr, War Minister.

Comte de Jaucourt, peer of France, Minister of the Marine.

The Duc de Richelieu, peer of France, Minister of the King's Household.

The portfolio of the Minister of the Interior, which was not immediately disposed of, was provisionally entrusted to the Minister of Justice. But what was most gratifying to the public in the composition of this new ministry was that M. de Blacas, who had made himself so odious to everybody, was superseded by M. de Richelieu, whose name revived the memory of a great Minister, and who, by his excellent conduct throughout the whole course of his career, deserves to be distinguished as a model of honour and wisdom.

General satisfaction was expressed on the appointment of Marshal Macdonald to the post of Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honour in lieu of M. de Pradt. M. de Chabrol resumed

the Prefecture of the Seine, which, during the Hundred Days, had been occupied by M. de Bondi, M. de Mole was made Director-General of bridges and causeways. I was superseded in the Prefecture of Police by M. Decazes, and M. Beugnot followed M. Ferrand as Director-General of the Post-office.

I think it was on the 10th of July that I went to St. Cloud to pay a visit of thanks to Blucher. I had been informed that as soon as he learned I had a house at St. Cloud he sent a guard to protect it. This spontaneous mark of attention was well deserving of grateful acknowledgment, especially at a time when there was so much reason to complain of the plunder practised by the Prussians. My visit to Blucher presented to observation a striking instance of the instability of human greatness. I found Blucher residing like a sovereign in the Palace of St. Cloud, where I had lived so long in the intimacy of Napoleon, at a period when he dictated laws to the Kings of Europe before he was a monarch himself.

—[The English occupied St. Cloud after the Prussians. My large house, in which the children of the Comte d'Artois were inoculated, was respected by them, but they occupied a small home forming part of the estate. The English officer who commanded the troops stationed a guard at the large house. One morning we were informed that the door had been broken open and a valuable looking-glass stolen. We complained to the commanding officer, and on the affair being inquired into it was discovered that the sentinel himself had committed the theft. The man was tried by

a court-martial, and condemned to death, a circumstance which, as may naturally be supposed, was very distressing to us. Madame de Bourrienne applied to the commanding officer for the man's pardon, but could only obtain his reprieve. The regiment departed some weeks after, and we could never learn what was the fate of the criminal.— Bourrienne.]—

In that cabinet in which Napoleon and I had passed so many busy hours, and where so many great plans had their birth, I was received by the man who had been my prisoner at Hamburg. The Prussian General immediately reminded me of the circumstance. "Who could have foreseen," said he, "that after being your prisoner I should become the protector of your property? You treated me well at Hamburg, and I have now an opportunity of repaying your kindness. Heaven knows what will be the result of all this! One thing, however, is certain, and that is, that the Allies will now make such conditions as will banish all possibility of danger for a long time to come. The Emperor Alexander does not wish to make the French people expiate too dearly the misfortunes they have caused us. He attributes them to Napoleon, but Napoleon cannot pay the expenses of the war, and they must be paid by some one. It was all very well for once, but we cannot pay the expense of coming back a second time. However," added he, "you will lose none of your territory; that is a point on which I can give you positive assurance. The Emperor Alexander has several times repeated in my presence to the King my master,

"I honour the French nation, and I am determined that it shall preserve its old limits."

The above are the very words which Blucher addressed to me. Profiting by the friendly sentiments he expressed towards me I took the opportunity of mentioning the complaints that were everywhere made of the bad discipline of the troops under his command. "What can I do?" said he. "I cannot be present everywhere; but I assure you that in future and at your recommendation I will severely punish any misconduct that may come to my knowledge."

Such was the result of my visit to Blucher; but, in spite of his promises, his troops continued to commit the most revolting excesses. Thus the Prussian troops have left in the neighbourhood of Paris recollections no less odious than those produced by the conduct of Davoust's corps in Prussia.—Of this an instance now occurs to my memory, which I will relate here. In the spring of 1816, as I was going to Chevreuse, I stopped at the Petit Bicetre to water my horse. I seated myself for a few minutes near the door of the inn, and a large dog belonging to the innkeeper began to bark and growl at me. His master, a respectable-looking old man, exclaimed, "Be quiet, Blucher!"—"How came you to give your dog that name?" said I.—"Ah, sir! it is the name of a villain who did a great deal of mischief here last year. There is my house; they have left scarcely anything but the four walls. They said they came for our good; but let them come back again . . . we will watch them, and spear them like wild boars in the wood." The

poor man's house certainly exhibited traces of the most atrocious violence, and he shed tears as he related to me his disasters.

Before the King departed for Ghent he had consented to sign the contract of marriage between one of my daughters and M. Massieu de Clerval, though the latter was at that time only a lieutenant in the navy. The day appointed for the signature of the contract happened to be Sunday, the 19th of March, and it may well be imagined that in the critical circumstances in which we then stood, a matter of so little importance could scarcely be thought about. In July I renewed my request to his Majesty; which gave rise to serious discussions in the Council of Ceremonies. Lest any deviation from the laws of rigid etiquette should commit the fate of the monarchy, it was determined that the marriage contract of a lieutenant in the navy could be signed only at the petty levee. However, his Majesty, recollecting the promise he had given me, decided that the signature should be given at the grand levee. Though all this may appear exceedingly ludicrous, yet I must confess that the triumph over etiquette was very gratifying to me.

A short time after the King appointed me a Councillor of State; a title which I had held under Bonaparte ever since his installation at the Tuileries, though I had never fulfilled the functions of the office. In the month of August; the King having resolved to convoke a new Chamber of Deputies, I was appointed President of the Electoral College of the department of the Yonne. As soon as I was informed of my nomination I waited

on M. de Talleyrand for my instructions, but he told me that, in conformity with the King's intentions, I was to receive my orders from the Minister of Police. I observed to M. de Talleyrand that I must decline seeing Fouche, on account of the situation in which we stood with reference to each other. "Go to him, go to him," said M. de Talleyrand, "and be assured Fouche will say to you nothing on the subject."

I felt great repugnance to see Fouche, and consequently I went to him quite against my inclination. I naturally expected a very cold reception. What had passed between us rendered our interview exceedingly delicate. I called on Fouche at nine in the morning, and found him alone, and walking in his garden. He received me as a man might be expected to receive an intimate friend whom he had not seen for a long time. On reflection I was not very much surprised at this, for I was well aware that Fouche could make his hatred yield to calculation. He said not a word about his arrest, and it may well be supposed that I did not seek to turn the conversation on that subject. I asked him whether he had any information to give me respecting the elections of the Yonne. "None at all," said he; "get yourself nominated if you can, only use your endeavours to exclude General Desfouinaux. Anything else is a matter of indifference to me."—"What is your objection to Desfournaux?"—"The Ministry will not have him."

I was about to depart when Fouche; called me back saying, "Why are you in such haste? Cannot you stay a few minutes longer?" He then began to speak of the first return of the

Bourbons, and asked me how I could so easily bring myself to act in their favour. He then entered into details respecting the Royal Family which I conceive it to be my duty to pass over in silence: It may be added, however, that the conversation lasted a long time, and to say the least of it, was by no means in favour of "divine right."

I conceived it to be my duty to make the King acquainted with this conversation, and as there was now no Comte de Blacas to keep truth and good advice from his Majesty's ear, I was; on my first solicitation, immediately admitted to, the Royal cabinet. I cautiously suppressed the most startling details, for, had I literally reported what Fouche said, Louis XVIII. could not possibly have given credit to it. The King thanked me for my communication, and I could perceive he was convinced that by longer retaining Fouche in office he would become the victim of the Minister who had been so scandalously forced upon him on the 7th of July. The disgrace of the Duke of Otranto speedily followed, and I had the satisfaction of having contributed to repair one of the evils with which the Duke of Wellington visited France.

Fouche was so evidently a traitor to the cause he feigned to serve, and Bonaparte was so convinced of this,—that during the Hundred Days, when the Ministers of the King at Ghent were enumerated in the presence of Napoleon, some one said, "But where is the Minister of the Police?"

"E-h! Parbleu," said Bonaparte, "that is Fouche?" It was not the same with Carnot, in spite of the indelible stain of his vote: if

he had served the King, his Majesty could have depended on him, but nothing could shake the firmness of his principles in favour of liberty. I learned, from a person who had the opportunity of being well informed, that he would not accept the post of Minister of the Interior which was offered to him at the commencement of the Hundred Days until he had a conversation with Bonaparte, to ascertain whether he had changed his principles. Carnot placed faith in the fair promises of Napoleon, who deceived him, as he had deceived others.

Soon after my audience with the King I set off to discharge my duties in the department of the Yonne, and I obtained the honour of being elected to represent my countrymen in the Chamber of Deputies. My colleague was M. Raudot, a man who, in very trying circumstances, had given proofs of courage by boldly manifesting his attachment to the King's Government. The following are the facts which I learned in connection with this episode, and which I circulated as speedily as possible among the electors of whom I had the honour to be President. Bonaparte, on his way from Lyons to Paris, after his landing at the gulf of Juan, stopped at Avalon, and immediately sent for the mayor, M. Raudot. He instantly obeyed the summons. On coming into Napoleon's presence he said, "What do you want, General?" This appellation displeased Napoleon, who nevertheless put several questions to M. Raudot, who was willing to oblige him as a traveller, but not to serve him as an Emperor. Napoleon having given him some orders, this worthy servant of the King replied,

"General, I can receive no orders from you, for I acknowledge no sovereign but the King, to whom I have sworn allegiance." Napoleon then directed M. Raudot, in a tone of severity, to withdraw, and I need not add that it was not long before he was dismissed from the mayoralty of Avalon.

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