

NAPOLEON III (MY RECOLLECTIONS)

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Napoleon III (my recollections) by Sir William Fraser

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SIR WILLIAM FRASER

**NAPOLEON III (MY
RECOLLECTIONS)**

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NAPOLEON III.

(*MY RECOLLECTIONS*)

BY

SIR WILLIAM FRASER, BARONET:

M.A. OF CHRISTCHURCH, OXFORD:

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NAPOLEON III.

NAPOLEON III. when living in London as a young man proposed marriage to two ladies, both of whom I had the honour of knowing: I use the term honour advisedly; for the lives of both have shown them to be exemplary women.

One was the daughter of M^r and M^{rs} Rowles, who had a large house at the North end of Stratton Street, Piccadilly. The mother of this young lady was an Italian: and may possibly have been connected with the Buonaparte family.

M^{rs} Rowles had been in her youth, as my mother informed me, one of the most beautiful women in Europe. When I knew her, in advanced middle age, I could see no trace of the charms which she had pos-

sessed ; except a lithe and very sinuous figure ; and a very gentle manner. This lady seems to have had, not only ' the fatal gift of Beauty,' but something of that power of Destiny, which Italians occasionally give to those who are pre-eminent in this respect.

Residing for the Autumn at Ramsgate with her husband, they became acquainted with a young and rising lawyer. Nothing was ever suggested that was not strictly within the borders of propriety. There can be no doubt that the young man became the victim of one of those infatuations which exist even in this prosaic century. Soon after their return to Stratton Street, they invited him to dine. He accepted the invitation ; and showed no signs of emotion, nor broken-heartedness. He went home to his Chambers ; and destroyed himself that night. Many years after this event M^{rs} Rowles's husband, an elderly man, whom I can remember, of the most prosaic character, put an end to himself.

Their daughter, to whom the Emperor

proposed marriage, some years later married an Italian holding a high official position under the Papal Government of Rome.

Prince Louis was a frequent visitor at Camden House, Chislehurst, at that time the property of M^r and M^{rs} Rowles. It was from this lady that I had a letter of personal introduction to the Prince soon after his election to be President of the French Republic: and it was at Camden House that I had an interesting interview with him not long before his death. Of this hereafter.

M^{rs} Rowles's second husband was General James Craufurd, a descendant of my great grand-uncle, Quintin Craufurd.

THE SECOND YOUNG LADY who might have been an Empress was the daughter of an Officer of noble Irish family; who served on the Staff at Waterloo; and was wounded there. Her mother, of a great English family, was the adopted daughter of M^{rs} Fitzherbert, well known in

her relation to George IV. To this adopted daughter M^{rs} Fitzherbert bequeathed her large house in Tilney Street, Park Lane, at present occupied by Lord Manvers. The young lady married a nobleman holding a high position in the West of England.

The marriage took place in Devonshire ; at that time

‘ *Penitus toto divisus orbe :* ’

the nearest railway station to his Lordship's place being at Tiverton. Prince Louis with chivalrous loyalty attended the wedding : he travelled from Tiverton to the ancestral mansion of the bridegroom in company with the bride's brother ; who subsequently inherited his family Earldom. In the post-chaise he communicated to his companion the fact that King Louis Philippe had given him ten days to escape from his prison at Ham : that he was liberated by the sanction of the King. This was told to me by the recipient of the statement many years ago. After a long interval I put to him the