

Napoleon's Last Hours in France

J. David Markham

After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo,¹ he returned to Paris and attempted to either maintain power or abdicate in favor of his son. Napoleon failed in both of these efforts, however, and it was soon clear that he had to leave France. Napoleon and most of his entourage hoped to go to the United States. After



delaying his departure while unsuccessfully trying to obtain passports, Napoleon eventually left for the city of Rochefort, after staying some days at Malmaison. While in Rochefort, Napoleon and his entourage made plans to leave, but were slow to take decisive action.

On the 5th of July, Napoleon's brother Joseph arrived in Rochefort. Joseph had

already made arrangements for his departure, having maintained a small entourage of three people (a Spanish doctor, a valet and an American interpreter) and having put his valuables into safety. He was planning to go to America and urged Napoleon to do likewise. Joseph recognized the danger of further delay in Napoleon's departure and urged him to leave at the soonest possible moment, preferably now! Napoleon, said Joseph, should take only Bertrand along with him, as the others could easily join him later. The two brothers and their small group could leave together. The ships were being loaded and this could have been done.

Joseph also suggested that the two could exchange identities and Napoleon could leave while Joseph remained behind and pretended to be Napoleon. This could throw the British off and might have worked. Things were quickly coming to a head, but Napoleon could not bring himself to move. Many days were completely wasted with Napoleon considering first one option, then the other.

Things had been moving quickly in Paris. On the 6th of July, the Commission of Government, headed by Joseph Fouché, clearly worried about Napoleon's status, sent him a resolution

¹ Shorter versions of this paper were presented to the 2008 INS Congress in Ajaccio, Corsica and the 2009 Consortium on the Revolutionary Era in Savannah, Georgia. It is extracted and abridged from my book, *The Road to St Helena: Napoleon after Waterloo* (Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2008).

calling for him to leave France immediately.²

Whether this was an effort to save Napoleon or force him into the hands of the British is an open question, but it was clearly time for him to leave. Once Louis XVIII returned to power, Napoleon would be in trouble.

Meanwhile, the British force guarding the area around Rochefort was gaining strength, and Napoleon's options were yet again narrowed. On the 8th of July he asked General Nicolas Beker, who had been sent by Fouché to escort Napoleon to a ship, what his options were. He received this reply: "Sire," answered General Beker, "I am not in a position to give an opinion or advice to your Majesty, and for this reason I abstain. In a case so important, in which there are chances to run, I might, perhaps, have reason at some future time to reproach myself with the consequences of my advice in the resolution adopted, should that resolution, instead of conducting you to America, cause you to fall into the power of the English. The only advice which I dare venture to give your Majesty is that of adopting a prompt determination and of carrying into effect, as speedily as possible, the plan which you may adopt.

² General Anne Jean Marie Rene Savary (Duke of Rovigo). *Memoirs of the Duke of Rovigo, (M. Savary,)* Written by Himself: Illustrative of the History of the Emperor Napoleon. (London, 1828.), IV, (ii), 165-6

"The fate of France is unhappily determined; your Majesty may wait until agents are sent in your pursuit; from that moment the scene changes, Sire; the powers which I now hold from the Provisional Government cease, and your Majesty will be exposed to new dangers, of which it is difficult to foresee the result."

In pronouncing these words, the General was so affected that his words produced a strong sympathetic emotion on the Emperor in his turn.

"But General," said he; "should these events occur, you are incapable of giving me up?"

"Your Majesty," answered General Beker, "knows that I am ready to lay down my life for you; in such a case, however, my life would not save you. The same people who crowd under your windows every evening and oblige you to show yourself would, perhaps, prefer cries of another kind if the scene were changed. Then, Sire, I repeat it: Your Majesty, already threatened, would be completely compromised—the commanders of the frigates, receiving orders from the ministers of Louis XVIII would disregard mine, and that would render your safety impossible. Reflect upon the urgency of the circumstances, Sire, I beseech you."

“Well!” said the Emperor, “since it is so, give the necessary orders for proceeding to the Isle of Aix.”³

Napoleon had understood Becker well, and prepared to leave the mainland for the Aix, where he would be in a better position to take advantage of any opportunity to depart at a moment’s notice. A relieved Becker immediately informed the Provisional Government of this decision.

In the afternoon of 8 July, Napoleon said farewell to his supporters in Rochefort and took a carriage to Fouras, where he boarded a longboat from the *Saale* that was to take him to Aix. It was low tide, so Napoleon left the mainland on the back of a sailor named Beau. A small monument with a commemorative plaque was erected on the spot by Baron Gourgaud. Napoleon was joined by Beker, Count Henri Bertrand and General Gaspard Gourgaud. Other boats eventually picked up the remaining members of his group.

The eighth was an important date for more than this move. On that day, the Provisional Government breathed its last breath as the Prussians entered the courtyard of the Tuileries Palace. Napoleon was out of options: it was time to act. Instead of heading to the island, however, Napoleon had the boat take him to the *Saale* itself, where he arrived at 8:00 PM. If the winds were favorable, perhaps they could leave now. Napoleon boarded the ship with

³ Charles Jean Tristan, marquis de Montholon. *History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena*. 4v. (London, 1846), I, 77-78.

all honors. He inspected the ship, asked questions, and then dined with ship’s Captain Philibert. While treating Napoleon with proper respect, Captain Philibert exhibited less enthusiasm for Napoleon’s cause than one might have hoped. According to Ali’s memoirs:

The Emperor was very uncomfortable on board the frigate. The officers did not appear favorable to his cause; the captain was far from being satisfied at seeing on his ship the great misfortune which had come to take refuge there. Knowing the events which had just happened, and foreseeing all the results which might flow from them, he thought it well to walk warily. Consequently I think that when the emperor decided to live on the island of Aix, Captain Philibert must have exclaimed, “Ah! Now I can draw a long breath!” Moreover, the ship was extremely badly kept; it showed its commander’s negligence.⁴

⁴ Louis Étienne Saint Denis. *Napoleon from the Tuileries to St. Helena; personal recollections of the emperor’s second mameluke and valet, Louis Etienne St. Denis (known as Ali)*. Translated from the French and Notes by Frank Hunter Potter. With an Introduction by Professor G. Michaut, of the Sorbonne. With maps. (New York and London, 1922), 152-153.

The next morning, the 9th, Napoleon awoke to discover that the hoped-for shift in the winds had not occurred, and that there was no possibility of sailing for America. He could see two British ships blocking the channel. With little else to do, after breakfast Napoleon and some of his staff took longboats to the Island of Aix, where he spent part of the day inspecting the fortifications and



Captain Maitland

receiving the accolades of the local populace. He reviewed the drill of a rather surprised detachment of Marines who had turned out for their Sunday parade. He then inspected the fort, which he had personally ordered constructed, and noted that the British ships were, unsurprisingly, out of cannon range. For Napoleon, it would be the last time that he would truly be treated as Emperor.

Having completed all that he could do on Aix, Napoleon returned to his ship. It

had been an enjoyable day, perhaps, but nothing further had been accomplished towards obtaining his departure. Indeed, things were turning sour. Admiral Casimer Bonnefoux, the Maritime Prefecture of Rochefort, was waiting for Napoleon on the *Saale*, and presented Napoleon with a letter from Minister of Marine Denis Decrès, his last before being replaced by the new, Royal government. This letter made it clear that Napoleon was to leave French soil forever. He could sail on one of the available French frigates, take a smaller boat, or surrender to the British, but in any event he must leave very quickly.⁵ Of equal importance to what was said was what was left out: there was no mention of any passports. In fact, by now the British had formally denied the



BECKLER.

request, but Paris didn't seem interested in telling Napoleon the bad news.

Almost literally dead in the water, Napoleon spent the day of the 10th on board the *Saale*. Reports came in that the British

⁵ Montholon, 74-76.

blockade had tightened and that departure from this area was not possible. Napoleon could still try to sneak off to the ships in the river or perhaps elsewhere, but that was more and more problematic and, besides, his dignity would not allow that to happen. The Bertrands had several times promoted the idea of going to England, and Napoleon seemed more and more resigned to that possibility. He decided to send General Jean Savary and Count Emmanuel Las Cases to the *Bellerophon* to sound out its captain as to the status of any passports as well as to if he would consider allowing either French or neutral ships with the Emperor on board to pass unmolested in their journey to the United States.

At 7 AM on the 10th, the two men boarded the *Bellerophon* and met with Captain Frederick Maitland, a 38 year old Scotsman who commanded the ship. Las Cases had a letter from Bertrand, which had actually been dictated by Napoleon, for the captain: Rochefort, 9 July 1815

Monsieur l'Admiral:

The Emperor Napoleon, having abdicated from power and chosen the U. S. A. for a refuge, has embarked in the two frigates which are in the roads for the purpose of reaching his destination. He is awaiting the passport from the British

Government of which he has been informed, (*qu'on lui a annonce*), which compels me to send you the present flag of truce to ask if you have any knowledge of the said passport, or if you think it may be the intention of the British Government to impede our passage to the U. S. A. I should be extremely obliged if you would give me any news you may have. I have asked the bearer of this letter to tender you my thanks and my apologies for any trouble it may give you. I have &c.

Le Grand Maréchal
Comte Bertrand.⁶

Maitland professed to know nothing about passports. Of course, Napoleon knew he had not been promised any passports, and Maitland had been informed by Admiral Lord Keith that there would be no passports and that he should make every effort to capture Napoleon and take him to England, but both sides engaged in a delicate diplomatic dance where neither partner could really be trusted.⁷

Maitland was courteous to his French guests, insisting that they have breakfast

⁶ Bertrand to Maitland, 9 July 1815, Admiral Viscount George Keith. *The Keith Papers. Selected from the Papers of Admiral Viscount Keith and Edited by Christopher Lloyd.* (Aldwich, 1926 (v I), 1950 (v II), 1955 (v III)), III, 350; also in Captain Frederick Lewis Maitland, *Narrative of the Surrender of Buonaparte and of His Residence on Board H.M.S. Bellerophon; with a Detail of the Principal Events that Occurred in that Ship, Between the 24th of May and the 8th of August, 1815.* (London, 1826), 27-29.

⁷ Secretary of Admiralty to Keith, 1 July 1815, *Keith Papers*, III, 347-348.

at his table. He reflected his



government's skepticism when he questioned whether or not anyone could really believe that Napoleon would voluntarily retire from politics. Savary insisted that Napoleon truly wanted to retire.⁸

Maitland, it seems, tried to



Las Cases

steer Savary and Las Cases toward the possibility of Napoleon settling in England, about which he claimed the climate was better than Napoleon might have imagined. He also tried to encourage the idea that Napoleon

⁸ Maitland, 34-35.

would be well treated in England. Several in Napoleon's entourage had suggested the possibility, most notably Madame Bertrand, and Napoleon had acknowledged it as an option. All in all, though, it was not a very hopeful meeting, as it served to reinforce the hopelessness of their situation. Maitland did make it clear that Napoleon would be welcome to come on board the *Bellerophon* whenever he might wish, but that he, Maitland, would do all he could to prevent Napoleon from escaping.⁹ Indeed, he wrote Count Bertrand a letter to that effect.¹⁰

Back on the *Saale*, Napoleon could hardly have been encouraged by the results of Savary's and Las Cases' visit to Maitland. Anyone could see that Maitland was stalling for time and that there would be no dignified trip to America with the blessings of the French and Allied governments. If Napoleon were to avoid the necessity of surrendering to the British, he would have to make a run for it.



Napoleon's Home on Aix

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹⁰ Keith to Bertrand, 10 July 1815, Keith Papers, III, 350-351; Maitland, 30-32.

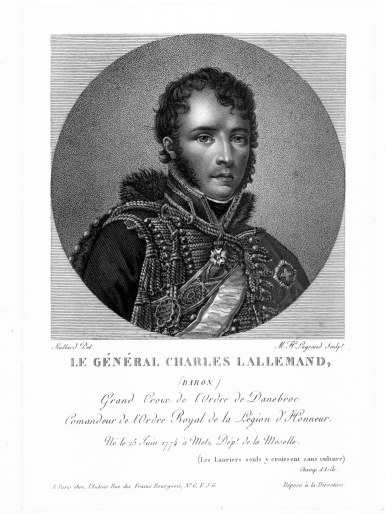
There was still the possibility of a successful escape, however. Captain Ponée of the *Méduse* was prepared to join with the brig *Épervier* and attack the *Bellerophon*. While this would do great damage to the two ships, they might well overwhelm the British ship and allow the *Saale* to make good her escape. The idea took hold and Napoleon ordered preparations to be made during the afternoon and evening of the 10th. There was no doubt excitement in the air: finally, Napoleon was going to act to secure his freedom.

It was not to be. Savary, who actually says that Napoleon made the decision late in the evening and sent him to Captain Philibert of the *Saale* with orders to leave immediately, but Philibert refused to sail, claiming that he had orders from Paris not to sail.¹¹

Without the cooperation of both of the French frigates, there was no hope of running the blockade. There were still other possibilities, of course, all of which had been considered before. General Lallemand, disguised as a sailor, had been sent to explore the possibilities still remaining at the mouth of the Gironde River. There he was assured that if Napoleon would quietly arrive, with only 3 men with him, it was still possible for him to make it to America. Alternatively, Napoleon could still take off over land and seek a different port of departure. These possibilities were there, but they were far less viable than they had been even a few days earlier.

¹¹ Savary, IV (ii), 158-159.

Worse, word arrived on the 11th of Louis XVIII's triumphal entry into a now-subdued Paris. The government had changed hands and at least some of Napoleon's followers—Lallemand,



Savary, Gourgaud and Montholon come to mind— might well stand accused of treason. It was unclear what Louis' attitude towards Napoleon would be, but it was not likely to be favorable. Moreover, some of the Allies would still like to get their hands on Napoleon. Surrender to the British was one thing, but capture by the Prussians was quite another.

Napoleon decided to move to the Island of Aix, which he did on the 12th of July. That same day, H.M.S. *Cyrus* joined in the British blockade, and some other small ships were also now in the area. Maitland moved to tighten the noose by moving his ships into positions closer to the sea passages leading out from Rochefort.¹²

¹² Maitland, 36-38.

Napoleon took his quarters at the garrison commander's home, located towards one end of the island. It was a very pleasant two-story home that had been built in 1808. Napoleon was still safe, as most of the people of Aix hated the British, who years earlier had destroyed a French fleet with fire ships while they watched. They loved the Emperor, but he now had to begin to worry about events on the mainland. The white flag of the Bourbons could be seen hoisted in Rochefort from time to time. True, it was generally withdrawn in favor of the tricolor, but the tide was clearly turning. Soon, it would be treason for anyone to give him aid and comfort, which made it virtually impossible for Napoleon to return to the mainland and seek a different port.

Capture by the Prussians and perhaps even the French would lead to his execution or, at best, imprisonment in some small cell somewhere. Capture by the British would make him a legitimate prisoner of war, at least until some treaty of peace was signed. Napoleon felt that *surrender* to the British, however, would put him in an entirely different, and more favorable, legal situation than surrender to the French.

But the decision to surrender to the British had not yet been made. His brother Joseph arrived on Aix on the 13th and again urged Napoleon to flee to the mainland, possibly posing as Joseph, and make good his escape. Napoleon declined, Joseph left and the two would never see each other again. General Lallemand and others in urged Napoleon to flee on a smaller boat that

could perhaps make its way along the coast. Saint Denis relates that Napoleon ordered the ship to be made ready, and had assembled several firearms and other materials for the journey. Denis relates:

The persons who were to embark with His Majesty to go to America were the Duke of Rovigo [Savary], the Grand Marshal [Bertrand], and General Lallemand. I had been chosen to accompany the Emperor, as being the one who could best endure seasickness and fatigue. All was prepared; I was waiting, fully equipped, when I learned, about midnight, that in a family council and after mature deliberation it had been decided that the Emperor should surrender to the English.¹³

Thus, after weeks of indecision, Napoleon had made his final choice. He chose dignity and safety for himself and his companions over a greater chance of freedom in America. But Napoleon had not heeded the warnings of some of his supporters of what he might expect if he put himself in the hands of the British.

There were other, smaller, choices that Napoleon made now. Choosing the people to accompany him into what they hoped would eventually be exile in America had not been easy. Gourgaud had been especially incensed at being left out and argued a great deal with Napoleon over the matter. In the end, he was included.

¹³ Saint Denis, 153-154.

Early on the morning of the 14th, Napoleon sent Count Las Cases and General Lallemand to visit Captain Maitland. As he had with Savary and Las Cases, Maitland welcomed the two men graciously. Las Cases claims that Maitland assured them that Napoleon would be well-treated in England, and that it might even be the first step in an ultimate trip to America,¹⁴ while Maitland claims there was no such discussion of America.¹⁵

The meeting concluded and Las Cases and Lallemand left for Aix, arriving there around eleven in the morning. They really had no news of great import, other than Maitland's assurance that Napoleon would be well received should he decide to go to England. This, backed up by the assurances given Lallemand by Maitland regarding his safety, seemed to turn the tide. Savary, another man in deep trouble in France, was no doubt pleased with the assurance given Lallemand.

At around 2:00 PM, Napoleon called a meeting of all of his close advisors. Napoleon considered all that was said, though it is extremely likely that his mind was already made up. In addition to making a run for it, there was also still the possibility of returning to France and leading the many loyal units that were nearby. But Napoleon was

¹⁴ Marie Joseph Emmanuel Auguste Dieudonné, comte de Las Cases. *Mémorial De Sainte Hélène. Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of The Emperor Napoleon at Saint Helena.* (Boston, 1823). 4v, I, (i), 22-23.

¹⁵ Maitland, 45.

having none of any of that, or of making a run for it, saying:

“If it were a question,” said the Emperor, “of marching to the conquest of an empire, or of saving one from ruin, I might attempt a repetition of the return from the island of Elba. But I only seek for repose, and if I should once more be the cause of a single shot being fired, malevolence would take advantage of the circumstance to asperse my character.

I am offered a quiet retreat in England. I am not acquainted with the Prince Regent, but from all I have heard of him, I cannot avoid placing reliance on his noble character. My determination is taken. I am going to write to that prince, and tomorrow at daybreak we will repair on board the English cruiser.”¹⁶

Napoleon had no doubt been keeping in mind the example of his brother Lucien. In 1811, Lucien had surrendered to the British and been kept in England as a prisoner. Some prisoner! He had purchased a country estate and entertained many of the country's elite nobility. On Elba, Napoleon had entertained his share of visiting British nobility, and had been quite impressed. It is easy to see how Napoleon could see England as a reasonable alternative. All well and good, but the English nobles he

¹⁶ Savary, IV (ii), 161.

entertained were not the British government, and Lucien was not Buonaparte the Usurper!

Napoleon had plenty of reason to get a move on. Count Jaucourt, Louis XVIII's Minister of Marine, had issued orders to have Napoleon remain on the *Saale* and to not allow him to communicate with the British. Clearly Louis wanted Napoleon for himself, and Fouché and Talleyrand were doing their best to oblige. The Allies, looting museums, inflicting onerous billeting requirements on French citizens and making France understand as best they could just who had won at Waterloo, were anxious that Napoleon pay the price for his return. Orders were sent to prevent Napoleon's escape or surrender, calling for his arrest and rendition to Louis XVIII. Bonnefoux, who seems to have been trying to keep the Emperor from falling into the hands of the Bourbons, wrote letters to Captain Philibert and General Beker that Napoleon needed to surrender to the British and quickly, lest things get out of hand.¹⁷

These orders notwithstanding, it is not entirely clear what Louis would do with Napoleon even if he caught him. The British, and perhaps all of the Allies save Prussia, understood that Napoleon still had a great following in much of the country. It is unlikely that the French people would have stood for

¹⁷ Quoted in Norwood Young, *Napoleon in Exile: St. Helena (1815–1821). With two coloured frontispieces and one hundred illustrations mainly from the collection of A. M. Broadley*. 2v. (Philadelphia, 1915), 48-49. Young says these letters are in the Earl of Crawford's collection.

Napoleon's execution or, perhaps, even imprisonment. The British, especially, understood this and Wellington had made it clear that he wanted no harm to come to Napoleon. A civil war led by Napoleon would have been a disaster for France; a general uprising against Louis resulting from Napoleon's execution would have been just as bad. Thus, the interests of Napoleon, the British and the Bourbons all converged into one: Napoleon should come under the control of the British.

From Napoleon's perspective, the risks were increasing by the hour. Clearly it was time to leave the country, as there were now specific orders to prevent Napoleon from escaping France. Napoleon sent Baron General Gourgaud and Las Cases to alert Maitland that Napoleon would arrive the next day, the 15th. Gourgaud carried with him three letters including, of course, the famous letter to the Prince Regent. Maitland read that letter in the presence of Captains Gambier and Sartorius of the *Myrmidon* and *Slaney*, respectively. The letter was Napoleon at his finest, and all were duly impressed:

Your Royal Highness, faced with the factions that divide my country and the enmity of the greatest powers in Europe, I have ended my political career. I come, like Themistocles, to sit by the hearth of the British people. I place myself under the protection of their laws, which I ask from Your Royal Highness, as the most powerful, the

steadiest, and the most generous of my enemies.¹⁸

This letter has long been the subject of sometimes heated discussion. Did Napoleon feel that this appeal would send him in glory to England, or was it a desperate gamble? It is impossible to say. Perhaps Count Molé had it right when he commented, "By the heroic tone of this letter Bonaparte concealed from himself the feebleness of this decision. It cannot be supposed that he expected it to have any result: the only effect was that he was sent to Saint Helena."¹⁹

The second letter informed the British that General Gourgaud should be sent to give Napoleon's letter in person to the Prince Regent, and established that he, Napoleon, wanted to retire in America or, failing that, in the English countryside under a false name.²⁰

Finally, there was a letter to Maitland from Count Bertrand containing a rather lengthy list of those to accompany Napoleon into exile.²¹

Early in the morning of July 15th, Savary warned Napoleon that it was necessary to leave immediately.

¹⁸ Napoleon to the Prince Regent of England, 14 July 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er}*; *Publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III*. (Paris, 1858-1869), No. 22066, XXVIII, 348; Marchand, 285.

¹⁹ Count Mathieu Louis Molé. *The Life and Memoirs of Count Molé*. Edited by the Marquis de Noailles. 2v, illustrated. (London, 1923), I, 309.

²⁰ Savary, IV (ii), 162-163.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 162-163; Maitland, 49-55 (includes the original French and a list of all accompanying Napoleon)



Count Bertrand

Napoleon quickly dressed in the uniform of the Chasseurs of the Guard, the green coat so familiar to his subjects then and collectors of his image now, and set out to make his move to meet his fate. They made their way to the dock. In the town and on ships, Napoleon could see the white flag of the Bourbons being hoisted; the two French frigates held off doing that for a time, and *L'Épervier* continued to fly the tricolor.

Napoleon boarded the boat that would take him to *L'Épervier*. Marchand describes the scene with a special poignancy:

Indeed, the next morning at 6 a.m., the brig *L'Épervier*, flying a truce flag, took the Emperor on board and conveyed him to the *Bellerophon*. The deepest sadness showed on every face, and when the British gig approached to

take the Emperor on board, the most heartrending cries were heard: officers and sailors saw with despair His Majesty trust his fate to the generosity of a nation whose perfidy they well knew. Having said goodbye to the crew and cast a final look on this beautiful France whose destiny he was abdicating, the Emperor climbed into the gig. Cries of *Vive l'Empereur!* mixed with sobs accompanied him until he arrived on board the *Bellerophon*. Despair was so great among some that they pulled their hair out, while others trampled their hats with their feet, out of rage.

It is regrettable that the Emperor did not board the *Méduse* rather than the *Saale*; the two captains did not have the same amount of vigor. The latter was a cold man who perhaps had orders to attempt nothing to save the Emperor; he had kept the fleurs-de-lis on the panes that separated the dining room from the salon, which could attest to his small measure of Bonapartism. The captain of the *Méduse* on the other hand was bursting with it. To save the Emperor or to die was his motto, and he envisioned that possibility by attacking the *Bellerophon* with both frigates while *L'Épervier* got through. That act of devotion was still possible on the day he went on board, but the next day the

presence of Admiral Hotham made it impossible. Learning of the Emperor's decision to surrender to the British, good Captain Ponée cried "Ah! Why did he not come on board my ship, rather than the *Saale*! I would have gotten him through in spite of the cruisers. In what hands is he placing himself? Who could have given him such vicious advice? That nation is nothing but perfidy! Poor Napoleon, you are lost, a terrible premonition tells me so!"²²

When the boat reached the brig, General Beker offered to accompany Napoleon to the *Bellerophon*, but Napoleon relieved him of what would have been an onerous task with at least some danger to Beker. He told Beker that he did not want people to feel that he had delivered France's deposed Emperor to the British, an accusation that would do Beker no good. The two men embraced, and Napoleon went on board the *L'Épervier*. Once on the ship, Napoleon inspected the crew and the ship and talked at some length with the captain, who tried one last time to get Napoleon to make a run for it. But Napoleon's mind was made up and he had sent officers to tell Maitland of his decision. Now his word of honor, and concern for his men, prevented any action other

²² Louis-Joseph Marchand. *In Napoleon's Shadow. Being the First English Language Edition of the complete Memoirs of Louis-Joseph Marchand, Valet and Friend of The Emperor 1811-1821*. Produced by Proctor Jones. Original notes of Jean Bourguignon and Henry Lachouque. Preface by Jean Tulard. (San Francisco, 1998), 285-286; Saint Denis, 154-155.

than to place his hopes in British honor. It would be misplaced hope, but he no longer had a choice.

At dawn on the 15th, Maitland saw *L'Épervier* sailing towards them under a flag of truce. Sir Henry Hotham's flagship, the *Superb*, was also seen approaching from another direction. Shortly thereafter, the wind shifted and *L'Épervier* was dead in the water. Maitland understood well the politics of the situation and wanted full credit for nabbing Napoleon. He sent his First Lieutenant with a barge to bring Napoleon on board prior to the arrival of the Admiral.²³

By all accounts, the officers and sailors on *L'Épervier* were in tears at the loss of their Emperor. Virtually to a man they thought Napoleon was making a mistake and should have sought passage, however difficult, to America. The sounds of their cheers rang in Napoleon's ears until they were out of hearing. Napoleon, himself in tears, dipped his hand three times in the water, throwing it on *L'Épervier* as a salute to their loyalty.

At shortly after six in the morning, the barge pulled alongside Maitland's ship. Its rowers appear to have been French prisoners, allowing Napoleon to arrive borne by French citizens rather than British sailors. When they arrived, the *Bellerophon's* crew manned the yards and its marines were at attention on deck. It was a reception for a general, not an emperor, but it was

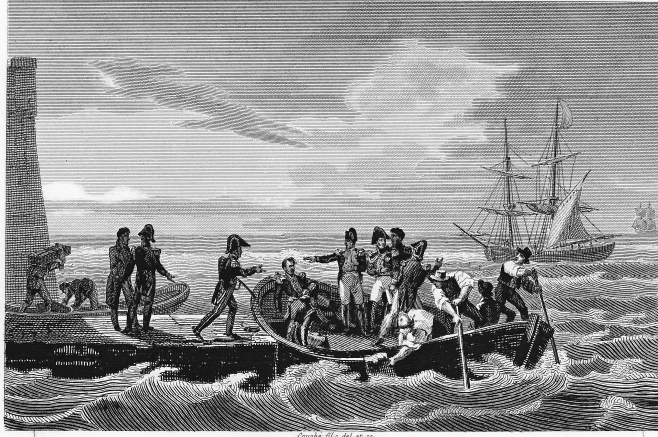
²³ Maitland, 68-69.

understandable. Maitland was unclear as to just what honors, if any, he should afford the Emperor. He wanted to show him every courtesy, but felt that his superiors might not approve full honors. As it was not yet eight in the morning, he fell back on regulations that precluded the firing of a salute, but in all other ways treated Napoleon as well as could possibly be expected.

The barge secured, General Count Bertrand, in what must have been one of his most difficult moments, regardless of his feelings that the English option was the best available at the time, boarded the *Bellerophon* and announced that "The Emperor is in the boat."²⁴ Captain Maitland and all of his officers stood by the gangway, and Napoleon made his entrance. Count Las Cases presented Captain Maitland to Napoleon, whose first words were, upon removing his hat, "I come on board your ship to place myself under the protection of the laws of England."²⁵ Napoleon had left France for the last time, and would meet a fate far worse than he had anticipated.

²⁴ Ibid., 71.

²⁵ Las Cases, I (i), 25. Some accounts say that Napoleon threw himself on the protection of the Prince Regent as well as upon British law.



Gravé par Del. et Sc.

EMBARQUEMENT DE NAPOLEON SUR LE BELLETRON.