

The 'Louis-Napoleon' La Pérouse

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The Turnbull Library's copy of the *Voyage de La Pérouse autour du monde*, edited by Milet-Mureau and published by the Imprimerie de la République in 1797, 4 volumes and atlas, bears on the flyleaf of the first volume the words:

Au Colonel Bouffet de Montauban, souvenir d'amitié,
Louis Napoléon '48

and, in a different handwriting, 'Londres, 15 août'.* In September 1848 Prince Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte left London for France to take up a seat in Parliament, and eventually to become President, and in 1851 Emperor as Napoleon III.

François Hypolitte Bouffet (the Mountauban is a later addition) had joined the army in 1806 at the age of thirteen. From the 23rd Infantry regiment, he transferred to the cavalry, was a sub-lieutenant at the age of fifteen, and went to Italy with General de Beauharnais. Wounded, he was well enough to fight at Wagram and join the Grand Army on its march into, and its retreat from, Russia. He was now a lieutenant-major. He distinguished himself at the Battle of Dresden in August 1813 and was given the Legion of Honour; but a rash pursuit of the fleeing Austrians led to the defeat of Kulm, and to his being taken prisoner.

The Austrians sent him to Milan, to recuperate from his wounds; he was repatriated in September 1814 as an officer on half-pay. As soon as he learnt of the Emperor's return from Elba, he dashed to join him at Grenoble, went with him to Paris, and then on to Waterloo. With the second restoration of the Bourbons, officers with his record were subjected to petty persecutions, forcing him to resign his commission in 1816 and emigrate to Belgium and soon after to the Americas. In 1819 he emerged as the colonel of a regiment of lancers in Colombia. In due course, the French authorities were to recognise his rank; but in 1823, back in Europe with enough money to live on, he was still in exile, residing in the Rhineland. The fall of Charles X in 1830 enabled him to return to Paris, as 'deputy for the French residents of Belgium and the

*This unusual dedication was noticed while the author was comparing the text of the MS of the La Pérouse Journals with the later printed account.