

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the  
French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

---

THE  
**LIFE**  
OF  
**NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.**

VOL. IV.

A

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

# L I F E

OF

## NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.

---

### CHAPTER I.

*Retrospect.—The Directory—they become unpopular. Causes of their unpopularity—Also at enmity among themselves.—State of public feeling in France—In point of numbers, favourable to the Bourbons; but the Army and monied Interest against them.—Pichegru, head of the Royalists, appointed President of the Council of Five Hundred.—Barbe Marbois, another Royalist, President of the Council of Ancients.—Directory throw themselves upon the succour of Hoche and Buonaparte.—Buonaparte's personal Politics discussed.—Pichegru's Correspondence with the Bourbons—known to Buonaparte—He dispatches Augereau to Paris.—Directory arrest their principal Opponents in the Councils on the 18th Fructidor, and banish them to Guiana.—Narrow and impolitic Conduct of the Directory to Buonaparte.—Projected Invasion of England.*

**W**HILE the Conqueror of Italy was pursuing his victories beyond the Alps, the French Directory, in whose name he achieved them had become, to the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

conviction of all men, as unlikely to produce the benefits of a settled government, as any of their predecessors vested with the supreme rule.

It is with politics as with mechanics, ingenuity is not always combined with utility. Some one observed to the late celebrated Mr Watt, that it was wonderful for what a number of useless inventions, illustrated by the most ingenious and apparently satisfactory models, patents were yearly issued; he replied, that he had often looked at them with interest, and had found several, the idea of which had occurred to himself in the course of his early studies. "But," said he, with his natural masculine sagacity, "it is one thing to make an ingenious model, and another to contrive an engine which shall work its task. Most of these pretty toys, when they are applied to practical purposes, are found deficient in some point of strength, or correctness of mechanism, which destroys all chance of their ever becoming long or generally useful." Some such imperfection seems to have attended the works of those speculative politicians who framed the various ephemeral constitutions of France. However well they looked upon paper, and however reasonable they sounded to the ear, no one ever thought of them as laws which required veneration and obedience. Did a constitutional rule preclude a favourite measure, to break it down, or leap over it, was the French statesman's unhesitating practice. A

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

rule was always devised applicable to circumstances ; and before that, the theory of the constitution was uniformly made to give way.

The constitution of the year Three was not more permanent than those by which it had been preceded. For some time, the Directory, which contained men of considerable talent, conducted themselves with great prudence. The difficulty and danger of their situation served to prevent their separating, as the weight put above an arch keeps the stones in their places. Their exertions in the attempt to redeem the finances, support the war, and re-establish the tranquillity of the country, were attended at first with success. The national factions also sunk before them for a season. They had defeated the aristocratic citizens of Paris on the 13th Vendemaire ; and when the original revolutionists, or democrats, attempted a conspiracy, under the conduct of Gracchus Babeuf, their endeavour to seduce the troops totally failed, and their lives paid the forfeit of their rash attempt to bring back the reign of Terror. Thus, the Directory, or Executive power, under the constitution of the year Three, were for a season triumphant over the internal factions, and, belonging to neither, were in a situation to command both.

But they had few who were really, and on principle, attached to their government, and most endured it only as something better than a new revolutionary

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

movement, and otherwise in no respect eligible. To have rendered their authority permanent, the Directory must have had great unanimity in their own body, and also brilliant success abroad, and they enjoyed neither one nor the other. The very concoction of their body included the principles of disunion. They were a sort of five kings, retiring from office by rotation, inhabiting each his separate class of apartments in the Luxembourg palace, having each his different establishments, classes of clients, circles of courtiers, flatterers, and instruments. The republican simplicity, of late so essential to a patriot, was laid aside entirely. New costumes of the most splendid kind were devised for the different office-bearers of the state. This change took its rise from the weakness and vanity of Barras, who loved show, and used to go a-hunting with all the formal attendance of a prince. But it was an indulgence of luxury, which gave scandal to both the great parties in the state;—the Republicans, who held it altogether in contempt; and the Royalists, who considered it as an usurpation of the royal dress and appendages.

The finances became continually more and more a subject of uneasiness. In the days of Terror money was easily raised, because it was demanded under pain of death, and assignats were raised to *par* by guillotining those who sold or bought them at less than their full value; but the powerful argument

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.

7

of violence and compulsion being removed, the paper money fell to a ruinous discount, till its depression threatened, unless remedied, altogether to stop the course of public business. It perhaps arose from the difficulty of raising supplies, that the Directory assumed towards other countries a greedy, grasping, and rapacious character, which threw disgrace at once upon the individuals who indulged it, and the state whom they represented. They loaded with exactions the trade of the Batavian republic, whose freedom they had pretended to recognize, and treated with most haughty superiority the ambassadors of independent states. Some of these high officers, and Barras in particular, were supposed accessible to gross corruption, and believed to hold communication with those agents and stock-brokers, who raised money by jobbing in the public funds—a more deservedly unpopular accusation than which can hardly be brought against a minister. It was indeed a great error in the constitution, that though one hundred thousand livres were yearly allowed to each Director while in office, yet he had no subsequent provision after he had retired from his fractional share of sovereignty. This penury, on the part of the public, opened a way to temptation, though of a kind to which mean minds only are obnoxious; and such men as Barras were tempted to make provision for futurity, by availing themselves of present opportunity

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

**Their five majesties (Sires) of the Luxembourg, as people called them in ridicule, had also their own individual partialities and favourite objects, which led them in turn to tease the French people with unnecessary legislation. La Reveillere-Lepaux was that inconsistent yet not uncommon character, an intolerant philosopher and an enthusiastic deist. He established a priesthood, and hymns and ceremonies for deism; and, taking up the hopeful project of substituting a deistical worship for the Christian faith, just where Robespierre had laid it down, he harassed the nation with laws to oblige them to observe the *decades* of their new calendar as holidays, and to work at their ordinary trades on the Christian Sabbath. At La Reveillere's theory freethinkers laughed, and religious men shuddered; but all were equally annoyed by the legislative measures adopted on a subject so ridiculous as this new ritual of heathenism. Another cause of vexation was the philosophical arrangement of weights and measures upon a new principle, which had in the meantime the inconvenience of introducing doubt and uncertainty into all the arrangements of internal commerce, and deranging entirely such as France continued to hold with countries who were only acquainted with the ordinary standard.**

**It might have been thought that the distinguished success of the French arms under the auspices of the Directory would have dazzled the eyes of the**

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

French, attached as they have always been to military glory, and blinded them to other less agreeable measures of their government. But the public were well aware, that the most brilliant share of these laurels had been reaped by Buonaparte on his own account; that he had received but slender reinforcements from France (the magnitude of his achievements considered); and that in regard to the instructions of government, much of his success was owing to his departure from them, and following his own course. It was also whispered, that he was an object of suspicion to the Directors, and on his part undervalued their talents, and despised their persons. On the Rhine, again, though nothing could have been more distinguished than the behaviour of the Republican armies, yet their successes had been chequered with many reverses, and, contrasted with the Italian campaigns, lost their impression on the imagination.

While they were thus becoming unpopular in the public opinion, the Directory had the great misfortune to be at enmity among themselves. From the time that Letourneur retired from office in terms of the constitution, and Barthelemy was elected in his stead, there was a majority and an opposition in the Directory, the former consisting of Barras, Rewbel, and La Reveillere—the latter, of Carnot and Barthelemy. Of the two last, Carnot (who had been, it



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

may be remembered, a member of the Committee of Public Safety under Robespierre) was a determined Republican, and Barthelemy a Royalist;—so strangely do revolutionary changes, like the eddies and currents of a swollen river, bring together and sweep down side by side in the same direction, objects the most different and opposed. Barthelemy of course dissented from the majority of the Directors, because secretly and warmly he desired the restoration of the Bourbons, an event which must have been fraught with danger to his colleagues, all of whom had voted for the death of Louis XVI. Carnot also differed from the majority, certainly with no such wish or view; but, his temper being as overbearing as his genius was extensive, he was impatient of opposition, especially in such cases where he knew he was acting wisely. He advised strongly, for example, the ratification of the articles of Leoben, instead of placing all which France had acquired, and all which she might lose, on the last fatal cast with an enemy, strong in his very despair, and who might raise large armies, while that of Buonaparte could neither be reinforced nor supported in case of a reverse. Barras's anger on the occasion was so great, that he told Carnot at the council-board, it was to him they owed that infamous treaty of Leoben.

While the Directory were thus disunited among themselves, the nation showed their dissatisfaction

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02315-3 - The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, Volume 4

Walter Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

openly, and particularly in the two bodies of representatives. The majority indeed of the Council of Elders adhered to the Directory, many of that body belonging to the old republican partizans. But in the more popularly composed Council of Five Hundred, the opposition to the government possessed a great majority, all of whom were decidedly against the Directory, and most of them impressed with the wish of restoring, upon terms previously to be adjusted, the ancient race of legitimate monarchs. This body of persons so thinking, was much increased by the number of emigrants, who obtained, on various grounds, permission to return to their native country after the fall of Robespierre. The forms of civil life began now to be universally renewed; and, as had been the case in France at all times, excepting during the bloody reign of Terror, women of rank, beauty, talent, and accomplishments, began again to resume their places in society, and their saloons or boudoirs were often the scene of deep political discourse, of a sort which in Britain is generally confined to the cabinet, library, or dining-parlour. The wishes of many, or most of these coteries, were in favour of royalty; the same feelings were entertained by the many thousands who saw no possible chance of settling the nation on any other model; and there is little doubt, that had France been permitted at that moment an uninfluenced choice, the Bourbon family