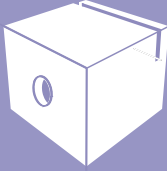


Published by:



E A R L Y V I S U A L M E D I A L A B

C I C A N T

**Denis Pellerin** is a photo-historian with a passion for stereo photography. He has been researching and learning about the history of stereoscopy for over 45 years and has written or co-written more than a dozen books and authored nearly seventy articles on his pet subject, both in French and in English. His latest book “L’Empereur, sa femme et le p’tit Prince: la famille impériale, la photographie et le stéréoscope” was released in May 2023, less than two years after his study on the first thirty years of the stereoscopic medium: “Stereoscopy: the Dawn of 3-D”. Since 2012 Pellerin has been the head curator of Dr. Brian May’s extensive collection of stereo photographs, now a charity. Dr. May and Pellerin have co-authored three books together and Pellerin is already working on some new publications deeply involved in the various activities of the Brian May Archive of Stereoscopy and of the London Stereoscopic Company. Denis has been the director of the said company since September 2015. Over the past few years he has given over a hundred and thirty Zoom and in-person 3-D talks on different aspects of Victorian stereo photography and has lately broaden his investigations to cover the first half of the twentieth century.

**NAPOLEON III:  
HIS USE OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
AND STEREOSCOPY  
FOR POLITICAL  
PURPOSES**

DENIS PELLERIN

Brian May Archive of Stereoscopy, photography Historian

## Abstract

One hundred and fifty years after his death Emperor Napoleon III still has bad press in France. History made him a villain and a failure when he was one of the very first modern European statesmen. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was a man of his time and used several contemporary inventions to promote his person and his regime. Photography and stereoscopy were two of them and he utilized both, when he was at the summit of his political career, prior to his departure to the seat of war during the 1859 conflict with Austria, and soon after he landed in Britain, an exile, just released from captivity following the Franco-Prussian war. Few of his contemporaries understood as he did the power of the photographic image and even though it is very difficult to assess how successful his attempts at using the medium were it cannot be said that he didn't try hard.

**Keywords:** Napoleon III – stereoscopy – cartes-de-visite – Disdéri – Mayer et Pierson – Gaudin Brothers – Nadar

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1873) had learnt photography in the early 1840s, while a captive prince, and knew how to take portraits with Daguerre's process. However he was not the first reigning monarch to be photographed. This honour belongs to King Louis Philippe of France (1773-1850), whose features were captured on the metal plate of the daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet (1797-1867), assisted by Noël Paymal Le-rebours (1807-1873), on 15 April 1843 at the Tuileries Palace.

Louis Napoleon was not the first ruler either to have his portrait made for the stereoscope. In April 1854, the same Antoine Claudet took at least three stereoscopic likenesses of Queen Victoria. These photographs, however, were commissioned for private use only and were never reproduced or commercialised. One is still in the Royal collections but the other two were given away at some time and later donated to the Museum of London.

We know from an article published on 2 April 1853 in *The Illustrated London News*, that an "accidental" stereoscopic portrait of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte was taken by William Edward Kilburn (1818-1891) some time in 1847 or 1848 when the nephew of the first emperor was not a monarch yet, only an escaped prisoner (after six years of captivity he had managed to escape the fortress he had been incarcerated in following a failed coup in 1840 and had taken refuge in Britain):

STEREOSCOPIC PORTRAIT OF THE FRENCH EMPEROR. – Mr. Kilburn, the eminent photographer, of Regent street, has recently invented an extremely convenient and portable form of stereoscope, and, at the suggestion of a scientific friend, has applied it in

realising a very striking portraiture of the French Emperor. It appears that Mr. Kilburn took two portraits of Louis Napoleon in the course of the latter's stay in London; both admirable likenesses, and which, by a happy accident, were in such relative positions, that, although not exactly of a size, upon being adjusted to the same scale, they became available for stereoscopic purposes; and a representation has thus been produced of one of the most remarkable men of the age, which approaches as nearly as can be conceived to the appearance of real life. (1853, p. 7)

In 1858, some time prior to his departure to the imperial residence of Fontainebleau on 23 May, the then Emperor Napoleon III honoured the Paris studio of Mayer and Pierson with a visit and sat for several portraits, including one for the stereoscope which he allowed them to sell to the public. That was a very bold and very astute move on the part of the Emperor. When you look at a portrait in the stereoscope, you can almost feel you could talk to the person, that you are indeed standing or sitting next to them, "in the presence", so to speak. By authorising the sale of this stereoscopic likeness Napoleon III made sure his image would get into the homes of dozens of thousands of his subjects who would feel flattered, and probably a little awed, to be so close to him, closer than they would ever dreamt of being or would probably ever be in real life.

There was, I think, another reason why Napoleon III let this particular image be diffused. He was then at the peak of his popularity, his regime was firmly established, he had an heir since March 1856 and he had just miraculously survived an assassination attempt at the hands of Italian revolutionary Felice Orsini

who, on the evening of 14 January 1858, along with his three accomplices, managed to throw bombs under the imperial carriage on its way to the Opera Le Peletier where the Emperor and his wife were to watch Rossini's *William Tell*. The bombs killed eight people and wounded over a hundred and forty but the imperial couple was unhurt and appeared in their opera box minutes after the drama. The stereoscopic portrait shows someone who looks untroubled and sure of himself, which is exactly how the Emperor wanted to appear to his subjects. He wanted their trust in his ability to run the country for many years to come and the photograph somehow manages to convey a feeling of quiet strength and fortitude.

Not being in a position to produce photographs "en masse", something which had never been done before on such a scale, Mayer and Pierson turned to publishers Alexis Gaudin and Brother, who had enough staff to print large quantities of images and were also specialists in stereo photographs and stereoscopes. Their shop at 9, rue de La Perle, Paris, was the largest establishment in France entirely devoted to the sale of stereoscopic goods. On 2 June the press was claiming that nearly 20,000 copies of the Emperor's stereoscopic portrait had already been sold in Paris and London.<sup>1</sup> There may have been some exaggeration there but the portrait – albeit numerous copies having probably been destroyed after the defeat of Sedan and the fall of the Empire – is not too difficult to find which obviously means a large number of copies were produced.

The photographed was reviewed by Ernest Lacan, the editor of the Gaudin brothers' photographic journal *La Lumière*, on 5 June 1858. Although Lacan and the notice on the back of the stereo cards claim the portrait to have been taken on the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Emperor there is nothing to confirm the fact and I personally think the sitting at Mayer and Pierson's studio took place some time in May.

### **Stereoscopic Portrait of His Majesty the Emperor**

Most of the major newspapers have already announced the publication of a stereoscopic portrait of the Emperor, photographed on 20 April, by MM. Mayer brothers and Pierson. Although it is next to impossible to describe a work of this nature, it is far too important an image for *La Lumière* not to devote, at least, a few lines to it.

In this masterfully executed paper print, the Emperor, wearing the uniform of Lieutenant General, is shown sitting. His head, bare and turned to the left, is strongly yet delicately modelled. His left arm is casually leaning on a pedestal table, while his right hand, set on his thigh in an attitude often seen in horseriders, gives great firmness to the composition. The effect of this wonderful photograph is all the more stunning when seen through a stereoscope, as the light, striking at an angle of 45 degrees like in a painter's

---

1. His Majesty the Emperor, who is always full of solicitude for everything that can encourage the arts, has just consecrated the merit and importance of stereoscopic photography by allowing MM. Mayer and Pierson to reproduce a great stereoscopic portrait of His Majesty. Nearly 20,000 copies of this image have already been sold in Paris and London by the publishers, MM. Gaudin and Brother, who are are fully prepared to meet the demand. (*Le Constitutionnel*, 1858, p. 3.)

studio, enhances the relief and makes the outlines of the figure stand out. One cannot but wonder how the authors of this work, operating in a perfectly lit room, managed to obtain such an astonishing result. Everyone is struck by the wonderful likeness of this portrait; but what even professional artists see and admire in it is movement, colour, and life itself. We do not think it is possible to be more successful and we do not hesitate to state that, as far as we are concerned, this print is MM. Mayer brothers and Pierson's masterpiece.

It is important to mention that the publishers, MM. Alexis Gaudin and brother, have not spared any efforts to ensure the success of this very popular

publication. The prints are made in their studio and every copy, bearing their stamp, is checked with the greatest care before being delivered to the public. A short biography sums up in a few lines the life of the illustrious sitter; last but not least, the low price of the print makes it affordable to everybody.

Ernest Lacan (1858, p. 89)

As mentioned by Lacan each of the prints produced by the Gaudin brothers bore a label on which was printed a short biography of the imperial sitter. This biographical notice was translated into English and pasted on the back of the cards that were meant to be sold in Britain.



Fig. 01 Mayer brothers and Pierre Louis Pierson. Stereoscopic daguerreotype of the portrait they took some time in April-May 1858. Courtesy of the W. and T. Bosshard Collection.



Fig. 02 Mayer brothers and Pierre Louis Pierson. Stereoscopic tissue card of the same portrait. Author's collection.

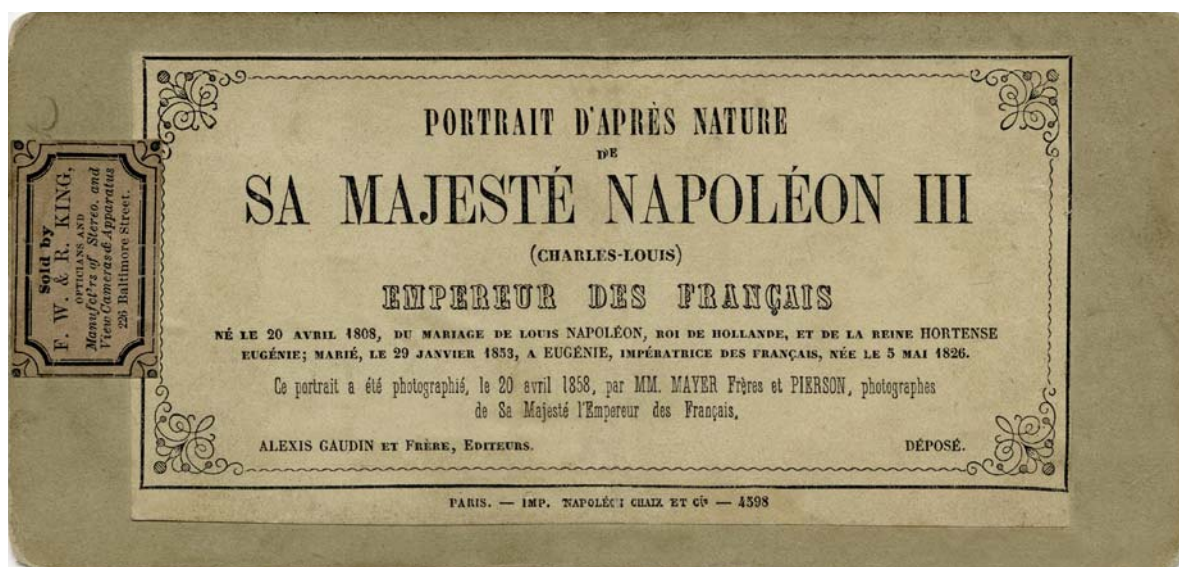


Fig. 03 Gaudin brothers. Label on the back of the stereo card version of the stereoscopic portrait of Emperor Napoleon III. Author's collection.

The stereoscopic portrait of the Emperor was first advertised in *La Lumière* on 12 June 1858. It was sold untinted at 5 francs and tinted at 6 to 8 francs. It was also possible to buy daguerreotype copies of the image for 12 francs.

The photograph was also advertised in Britain from July onwards. Here is, for example, the advertisement that appeared on page 3 of *The Times*, on 2 July. Note that the names of the photographers are absent from these lines :

PUBLISHED this day, a splendid STEREOSCOPIC PHOTOGRAPH of His Majesty NAPOLEON III, taken from life. — GAUDIN BROTHERS, publishers, 26, Skinner-street, Snow-hill. E.C.

It is not known whether the sale of the stereoscopic portrait of the Emperor had the desired effect on his subjects and endeared him to them but Louis Napoleon was never one to give up easily on anything that could make him more popular and he was soon to try again.

### The start of the carte-de-visite phenomenon

Adolphe Disdéri has often been credited with the invention of the carte-de-visite but we must give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and mention the name of Louis Dodero (1824-1902), a photographer from Marseille, France, who was the first to suggest the idea, which he hastened to develop in a letter he sent to the editor of *La Lumière* who published it in the 24 August 1851 issue of the photographic journal.

Mr Dodero was one of the early users of the collodion process and when, one day, he jokingly pasted a photograph of his face on his calling card, he realised that some people found it amusing and started imitating him. In his letter, the original of which has unfortunately been lost, he imagines the day when photographic prints being easier and less costly to produce it will be possible to apply photos of the bearer to passports, hunting licences, etc. (p. 115)

The idea was also toyed with by two wealthy amateur photographers, Edouard Henri Delessert and Count Olympe Aguado who, in 1854, produced a series of amusing photographs which were the same size as calling cards and were supposed to be adapted to the circumstances of the call or of the message the bearer meant to convey. For instance, if someone was leaving on a trip, he would be photographed wearing a travelling coat, a cap, and carrying a night bag and a blanket. If, on the other hand, he was giving a more formal call, he would be represented with gloves on and his top-hat in hand. These images were described and reviewed by Ernest Lacan in *La Lumière* on 24 October 1854, just over a month before Disdéri patented the photographic cartes-de-visite (patent number 21,502, dated 27 November 1854).

Where Dodero, Delessert and Aguado had mostly seen humour in photographic calling cards, Disdéri realised their commercial potential and how they could, by reducing the cost of the portraits, not only become accessible to everyone but also be highly profitable for the photographer. In his original patent Disdéri recommends taking 10 portraits on the same plate but it was later realised that four to eight





Fig. 04 André Eugène Adolphe Disdéri. Contact print for cartes-de-visite showing eight images and four different poses. It was also possible to have eight different attitudes on one plate. Negative No. 15449 featuring one M. Mazo. Author's collection.

images were more practical. The carte-de-visite portraits, which were introduced in Britain in the latter part of 1858 by Marion and Herbert Watkins did not really catch up on either side of the Channel until two particular events made them popular nearly overnight.

In his memoirs, *Quand j'étais photographe* (When I was a Photographer), the great Félix Tournachon, better known as Nadar (1820-1910), writes that Disdéri achieved sudden fame when Emperor Napoleon III, on his way to Italy to fight against the Austrians, stopped at his studio to have his portrait taken while the soldiers and officers who were accompanying him waited outside, fully armed (c.1900, p.211). Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was not the kind of person to let a whole army wait while he was being photographed and we must take Nadar's account of the event with a pinch of salt. Unless his memories got confused and he was remembering the huge military parade of 14 August 1859 when the troops back from Italy marched through the capital and the Emperor, with his generals, stopped for a few minutes *outside* Disdéri studio where they were photographed, everything having been made ready in advance so as to minimise the wait.

Napoleon III did have several photographic portraits taken just before leaving for the battlefield, but the actual sitting took place the day prior to his departure, on 9 May 1859. His visit to Disdéri's studio, in the company of the Empress and of his son and heir was not some whimsical decision but a calculated publicity stunt that would ensure that he would still be "present" in the minds of the French people while being physically hundreds of miles away from France. It was a kind of "Now

you see me, now you don't" but with a twist: "you can actually still see me, in photographs".

In her book *Photographs of Paris life*, which she signed under the name Chroniqueuse (Columnist), American journalist Olive Logan (1839-1909) mentions the visit of the Imperial family to Disdéri's studio and in a "letter" dated July 6<sup>th</sup> – her book, as were the articles she built it from, was written in epistolary mode – she states that, as a result "all the windows of the fine print-shops are filled with photographs of their Majesties in every imaginable posture, both standing and sitting. The exceedingly low price of these objects, added to the fact of their being excellent likenesses, has caused them to have an extensive sale." (1861. pp. 55-6)

Napoleon III was aware from the start of the potential of photography as a wonderful and powerful political medium and in honouring Disdéri's studio with a sitting, knew exactly what he was doing. On the verge of leaving for a conflict, the outcome of which was uncertain, both for his armies and for himself, he went to pose, with his wife and child, as a family man, not as a general, this is very important, to make a very strong point. When in 1855 the Emperor had decided he would join the troops fighting in the Crimean war, everybody, including Queen Victoria, had tried, and eventually managed, to dissuade him. His regime was not firmly established then, he had no heir and with him being so far away, chances were that he would not have a throne to get back to, if he ever got back that is. Four years later the situation had changed dramatically. His regime was strong, he had powerful allies, he had been blessed with a son and heir and his wife knew enough about



**Figs. 05a and 05b** André Eugène Adolphe Disdéri. Carte-de-visite portraits of Emperor Napoleon III. May 1859. Author's collection.



**Figs. 06a and 06b** André Eugène Adolphe Dideri. Carte-de-visite portraits of Emperor Napoleon III. May 1859. Notice how the Emperor looks less stiff and far more relaxed in the right-hand side image. Author's collection.

the current affairs to make a good regent. But since he wanted to show his subjects he was still watching over their welfare and that of France it was of great importance they could still see him, one way or another. Sitting in front of Disdéri's camera as "one of them" he was also addressing a message to the soldiers he was taking with him to the seat of war and to their families. These photos were his way of saying, "like you, I am leaving behind a beloved son and wife and I know what you and your loved ones must be feeling."

During that session, Disdéri took several individual portraits of the Emperor, standing and sitting, then pictures of the Empress, also on her own, before photographing Napoleon III and his wife, posing as a bourgeois couple on their way to pay a visit – they were sitting for cartes-de-visite after all, he with his top hat on and holding his walking stick, she with a shawl round her shoulders and a bonnet on her head, holding her husband's arm. He also took several likenesses of the Prince imperial and finally of the whole family, the emperor always standing behind his wife and child. In one of these, the young prince is actually sitting on his mother lap.

The photos of the Emperor are interesting to study as a group. He looks stiff and erect in a few of them, where he is first standing and then sitting in an armchair, but gradually relaxes, leaning forward, as if he were having an interesting conversation with the artist, which he may have had, and, at some point, twists one of the tips of his waxed moustache – a gesture which must have been a very familiar one – with a smile on his face, as though he were chuckling at some private joke. You cannot see his mouth, hidden by his moustache, but his

eyes are smiling, a very rare occurrence in photos of Napoleon III. I must confess that the latter is by far my favourite image from that sitting, along with the one where he is leaning forward, his left hand on the left arm on the armchair, his elbow on the right arm of the same chair and his right hand held rather high but dropping naturally. In both of them, he seems to have forgotten he is the emperor and shows the man behind the official masks he too often puts on in his portraits.

Of the portraits of the empress there is not much to say. She always looks very serious, with or without her shawl and bonnet on but, for the sake of the camera, plays her part of Regent of France very well. In all the group images, she is holding her head and eyes down, looking at her child, the image of the attentive, if a little aloof, mother.

The Prince imperial also looks very serious in most of his photos. Chroniqueuse, whom we mentioned earlier, describes him as "a sweet child; and, although not yet four years old, one would almost imagine that he knew already who he is, so dignified is his bearing and so chary is he of his smiles." (1861. p. 11) The young Louis posed in his white dress but also in the uniform of a Grenadier of the Guard, with either a cap called "bonnet de police" (undress cap) on his head or in a bearskin, holding a drum and with a small gun behind him.

I know from the scan of a CDV kindly sent to me by French collector Michel Lambert that the photo of the prince on his toy horse with the sword at his side was taken in May 1859, also by Disdéri, but it is not really clear whether it was obtained during the same photo shoot or on another occasion.

The visit of the imperial family to Disdéri's studio made the latter famous nearly overnight and soon everyone wanted to

have their carte-de-visite portrait taken by him. *Cartomania*, or the carte-de-visite craze, was born:

It is highly fashionable in Paris, this season, to have one's photographic portrait made, full-length, showing only the bust, or as a carte-de-visite, by Disdéri, the Emperor's photographer. The carte-de-visite portrait has indeed revolutionised our ways. Thanks to this ingenious stratagem, a woman of the world can give away her portrait without compromising herself. A pretentious fool, on the other hand, can no longer take advantage of a likeness of which there are a hundred prints. You can now choose your imaginary mistresses and populate your album with pretty faces. The King of Bavaria thought he was ahead of his time by having the famous beauties of Europe lithographed in his extremely rare collection: he had counted without photography and the album of M. Disdéri. (1860, p. 4)

The Emperor must have been pleased with the images made on his visit to Disdéri's studio – thousands of which were sold – and with the success of his publicity stunt. On 26 July 1859, not long after the war in Italy was over, he signed a decree making Disdéri photographer not only to his Majesty the Emperor, but also to his Imperial Highness prince Jérôme and to their Imperial Highnesses the prince and princess Napoleon, who had previously visited that artist's establishment and must have recommended it to him.

On the other side of the English Channel, it was also the monarch, Queen Victoria, who, following in the footsteps



**Fig. 07** André Eugène Adolphe Disdéri.  
Carte-de-visite portrait of Emperor Napoleon III  
twisting his moustache. May 1859. Author's collection.



Figs. 08a, 08b and 08c André Eugène Adolphe Disdéri. Carte-de-visite portraits of the Emperor and the Empress then of the Empress on her own. May 1859. Author's collection.



Figs. 09a, 09b and 09c André Eugène Adolphe Disdéri. Carte-de-visite portraits of the Imperial family. May 1859. Author's collection.



**Figs. 10a, 10b and 10c** André Eugène Adolphe Disdéri. Carte-de-visite portraits of the Prince imperial. May 1859. Author's collection.

of her friend and ally Napoleon III, gave cartes-de-visite an unexpected boost when she authorised in Spring 1860 the publication of the portraits John Jabez Edwin Mayall (born Jabez Meal) had made of her, Prince Albert and all their children. The *Royal Album*, as it was called, launched the fashion for carte-de-visite likenesses in the same big way Napoleon III's visit to Disdéri's studio in 1859 had. It would soon spread like wild fire.

### **The sitting at the London Stereoscopic Company's studio**

In May 1856 the London Stereoscopic Company had issued a couple of stereo cards representing the then two-month old son and heir of Louis Napoleon, the Prince Imperial, in his cradle. Advertisements of the time mentioned those had been made by special permission of the Emperor. Fifteen years later, George Swan Nottage and his cousin Howard John Kennard, the founders of the Company, had another surprise in store for the British public when they managed to arrange a sitting with the Emperor and his now teenage son, a few days





Fig. 11 John Jabez Edwin Mayall. Royal Album. "V. R. & A." (Victoria Regina & Albert). Front and back. Author's collection.



Fig. 12 Albert d'Arnoux, aka Bertall, photographer and cartoonist. L'illustration, 6 April 1861, p. 221. "Portraits-cartes de M. Arthur de Gandinenville". Author's collection. The same cartoon also appeared in Le Journal Illustré, L'Universel, and Le Nouvel Illustré.

only after the former had set foot on English soil following his release by the Prussians from his prison at Wilhelmshöhe.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor and his suite had travelled by train to Ostend before leaving for Dover on Monday 20 March. On the day of their departure from Cassel, the train station nearest to Wilhelmshöhe, they had heard about the events of the 18<sup>th</sup> of March in Paris which were to start the two-month revolution that became known as the Paris Commune. The Emperor landed at Dover harbour around two in the afternoon and

arrived at Chiselmurt shortly before four on the same day. On the following Saturday, 25 March, the Emperor and the Prince imperial were at the studio of the London Company sitting for their portraits for the stereoscope. It may seem incredible that this photo shoot took place only four days after the exiled Emperor's arrival but it must have been important both for the London Stereoscopic Company and for the Emperor himself to arrange that session. It is unfortunately not known who suggested it nor how long in advance it was planned but there is no doubt that Louis Napoleon was anxious to show

2. The Emperor was the "host" of Kaiser Wilhelm at Wilhelmshöhe from 5 September 1870 to 19 March 1871.

his supporters he was in good health – and ready to return to France if he was needed there – and that the London Stereoscopic Company were eager to be the first to take and sell the likeness of the ex-emperor, as there was a strong interest in the fate of the former prisoner. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte could not have forgotten that it was a revolution (the 1848 one) which had brought him to power, and there can be little doubt that he was counting on the current events, the discontent of the French population and their resentment at Mr. Thiers' government to try and have another shot at ruling France. Seven of the photographs obtained during that session were copyrighted on 29 March and described as follows:

- Photograph ¾ length group of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon standing ¾ face, and the Prince Imperial seated full face looking straight before him.
- Photograph ¾ length group of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon standing ¾ face, and the Prince Imperial seated nearly full face looking to his right.
- Photograph ¾ length group of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon seated ¾ face, and the Prince Imperial standing full face.
- Photograph of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon head & bust ¾ face looking to his right.
- Photograph of the Prince Imperial head and bust nearly full face looking to his right.
- Photograph of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon ¾ length standing full face.
- Photograph of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon ¾ length standing full face.

The images were issued and published in record time both as stereo cards and cartes-de-visite, the latter bearing the signature of the sitters. They were quickly reviewed in the press, the earliest mentions being made on 1 April.<sup>3</sup> Here is one which appeared on 3 April in the *Morning Advertiser*:

We have seen some admirable Napoleonic photographs, executed by the London Stereoscopic Company so lately as a few days ago. There is one of the Emperor alone, two of himself and his son, and one of the boy alone. The Emperor seems to have gained flesh, but we question whether it is a healthy development. Whether owing to this or not, he has not in these latest likenesses – and likenesses they certainly are – the haggard and care-worn look which appeared in those issued just before the late unhappy war broke out. Strange to say, he undoubtedly wears an English aspect in these delineations. He might be some staunch old master of the hound, or some country peer accustomed to good living and good society. For undoubtedly he looks like a gentleman; and none can read his history in these portraits. He seems to stoop slightly, as if accustomed to the saddle. We know a merchant in the City whose very effigy the one standing with his shoulder of the boy might be. The lad himself – we do not use the familiar expression slightly, but with commiseration for him in the misfortunes of his early career – is extremely like his mother. It is a proud, melancholy, intelligent face – a

---

3. Here is one of the many announcements relating to that photo session published in the British press on 1 April: The London Stereoscopic Company have just issued excellent portraits of the Emperor Napoleon and Prince Imperial, taken by them only a week ago. These are the only photographs of the Emperor taken in this country. (*Echo*, 1871, p. 2).



Fig. 13 London Stereoscopic Company. Stereo card. "Photograph  $\frac{3}{4}$  length group of the Ex-Empress Napoleon standing  $\frac{3}{4}$  face, and the Prince Imperial seated nearly full face looking to his right." 1871. Brian May Archive of Stereoscopy

reflective face, not destitute of goodness; and has in it an expression of suffering, which not even the buoyancy of youth has apparently been able to conquer. In a few days these portraits will be spread broadcast over the land.

[...] On the whole these portraits are highly satisfactory, and are exceedingly felicitous. The Emperor is dressed in a frock coat with velvet collar, and his coat, by the way, does not appear to fit him very closely and well. (1871, p. 3)

From an article published in *The Scotsman*, on 12 April, we learn that the portraits were selling well, that the London Stereoscopic Company could not print them fast enough to meet the demand, and also that they were taking photos of the residence of the exiled family.<sup>4</sup> The reviewer, however, makes a mistake when he says that portraits of the Empress were made on the same day as there is no trace of any photograph of the Empress by the London Stereoscopic Company nor is she mentioned in any of the press cuttings that report the sitting.

4. Those images were actually copyrighted on the day the article in *The Scotsman* was published.



Fig. 14 London Stereoscopic Company. Stereo card. "Photograph of the Ex-Empoleon Napoleon head & bust  $\frac{3}{4}$  face looking to his right." 1871. Author's collection.

Of late there has been a conflict of testimony as to the physical appearance of the Emperor Napoleon; and some little time ago I made a statement in this column on that subject, which I had received from trustworthy authority. It is now in my power to state from personal observation something on this point, which is, that beyond having lost what may be called the compactness of countenance which used to characterise him, and a lessening of the firmness of expression, the Emperor does not show much facial deterioration, or, at any rate, not as much as might have been expected. As to his hair, it is undoubted that it is very gray and in scarce quantity. The London Stereoscopic Company have recently taken some

admirable photographs of the Emperor, Empress, and Prince Imperial, which they sell very fast. Indeed, they are unable to comply fast enough with the demand. The same company is taking a number of photographs of the principal rooms of Camden House, Chislehurst, which are fitted up completely in the French style. The Emperor is by no means reticent in the expression of interest and sympathy which is evidenced by the large number of visitors to Chislehurst, anxious to get a glimpse of the Imperial family, which does not at all think this so much a nuisance as a homage. (1871, p. 3)



Fig. 15 London Stereoscopic Company. "Photograph  $\frac{3}{4}$  length group of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon seated  $\frac{3}{4}$  face, and the Prince Imperial standing full face". 1871. The images of the Emperor and of the Prince imperial were also published, from the same negatives, as cartes-de-visite. Since the left and right halves of the original stereoscopic pair were used to obtain those prints it is not impossible to find the two different photographs, align them properly, and reconstruct the stereo card. Author's collection.



**Figs. 16a and 16b** London Stereoscopic Company. "Photograph of the Ex-Emperor Napoleon  $\frac{3}{4}$  length standing full face." 1871. These two images are actually variants of the same pose. In the left-hand side image the Emperor is looking straight ahead, in the right-hand side one his head has hardly moved but his eyes are looking to the right. When the two images are properly aligned one gets an interesting stereoscopic effect. Author's collection.



**Figs. 17** London Stereoscopic Company. "Photograph of the Prince Imperial head and bust nearly full face looking to his right" 1871. Author's collection.

I must say I cannot look at these images without some sadness. Whatever the journalists wrote, the Emperor looks old and tired, although he tries hard to put on a jolly and optimistic countenance. The idea behind this hastily arranged

photographic session was obviously to show his followers that he was still alive and well but also to give them some hope as to the future of the dynasty, which is why the Prince is present in these images. The contrast between the worn-out exiled sovereign and his energetic son and heir is nowhere more obvious than in the photograph where the latter is standing next to the seated ex-emperor and looking straight at the camera.

Sixteen days after the article in the *Scotsman*, another piece, entitled "Anarchy and Order" was published in the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* which compared two photographs issued by the London Stereoscopic Company:

### **ANARCHY AND ORDER.**

The London Stereoscopic Company have published a couple of photographs, which might well be known under the above title. One represents a "Montmartre Red of 1871," a ferocious creature, armed with a great many more weapons than he would use if he were face to face with the Prussians, or with any other force that he thought more likely to fire upon him than to turn up the butts of their rifles and fraternise. The other is a portrait of Napoleon III, taken a few days after the arrival of his Majesty in England. The likeness of the Emperor is, without exception, the best we have anywhere seen, and, apart from its worth as a faithful portrait of a great man, it has a historical value from the circumstances under which it was taken. The Stereoscopic Company have also published a portrait of the Empereor with the Prince Imperial standing by the chair, the carte being further enriched by the autographs of Father and Son. (1871)





Figs. 18a and 18b The two cartes-de-visite published nearly at the same time by the London Stereoscopic Company. The caricature of the "Montmartre Red" was copyrighted on 10 April 1871. Author's collection.



Fig. 19 Adolphe Henriet, modeller, and Jules Raudnitz, photographer and publisher. Le Sabbat Rouge. Saturnales de la Place Vendôme. Tissue stereo card. Brian May Archive of Stereoscopia.

At the time the article above was written nearly everyone saw the rebels, or Communards, as blood-thirsty devils and they were represented as such in many caricatures which were made during the Commune and for some time after most of them were slaughtered and summarily executed, on Thiers' orders, by the regular troops. Even Adolphe Henriet, the first creator of the Diableries, featured them so in more than half of the stereo cards of the series he created for photographer and publisher Jules Raudnitz under the title "Le Sabbat Rouge" (The Red Sabbath).

The Commune perished in a bloodbath in the last days of May 1871 but in a last ditched effort to slow down the advance of the regular troops the Communards set lots of official buildings on fire. The Hôtel de Ville (City Hall), the Ministère des Finances (Treasury) and the Tuileries Palace, among many others, went up in flames, as did Napoleon's hopes of ever regaining his throne. His last photographic campaign did not have the success he was expecting and if, by the time the portraits made by the London Stereoscopic Company reached France, the resentment of the population was definitely not so high as it had been just after the defeat of Sedan, they were simply not willing to have him back. Louis Napoleon

Bonaparte was never to set foot on French soil again and died, an exile, on 9 January 1873, less than two years after his release from Wilhelmshöhe.

It is next to impossible to assess how efficient Napoleon III's numerous attempts were at gaining his subjects' love and respect through CDVs and stereo photographs of himself and of his family but one cannot say he didn't try hard. Whatever has been said about him – and usually against him – since the fall of the Empire, there is no doubt he was one of the first modern statesmen and was well aware how contemporary inventions like the telegraph and photography could play a very important part in helping rulers of a country have a bigger outreach, get closer to their subjects and make them part of what was going on in the world they lived in.

(1851, August 24). *La Lumière*.

(1860, June 15). *Mémorial de la Loire et de la Haute-Loire*.

(1871, April 3). *Morning Advertiser*.

(c. 1900). Félix, T. G. (dit Nadar). *Quand j'étais photographe*.

(1853, April 2). *The Illustrated London News*.

(1871, April 12). *The Scotsman*.

## REFERENCES

(1871, April 1). *Echo*.

(1871, April 28). *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*.

Lacan, E. (1854, October 24). Vues et portraits par M. Edouard Delessert. *La Lumière*.

Lacan, E. (1858, June 5). *La Lumière*.

Logan, O. (1861). *Photographs of Paris life: a record of the politics, art, fashion and anecdote of Paris during the past eighteen months*.

(1858, June 2) *Le Constitutionnel*.

