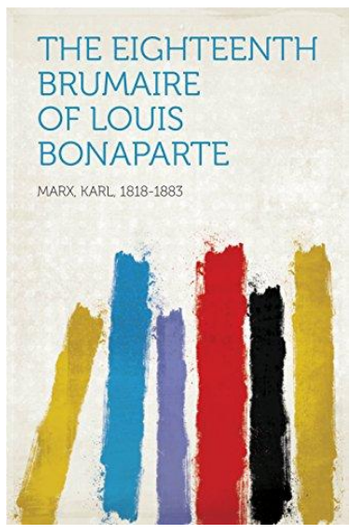

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The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

van Marx, Karl

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> Hegel says somewhere that that great historic facts and personages recur twice.

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> He forgot to add: "Once as tragedy, and again as farce." Caussidiere for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the "Mountain" of 1848-51 for the "Mountain" of 1793-05, the Nephew for the Uncle. The identical caricature marks also the conditions under which the second edition of the eighteenth Brumaire is issued. Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand. The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living. At the very time when men appear engaged in revolutionizing things and themselves, in bringing about what never was before, at such very epochs of revolutionary crisis do they anxiously conjure up into their service the spirits of the past, assume their names, their battle cries, their costumes to enact a new historic scene in such time-honored disguise and with such borrowed language Thus did Luther masquerade as the Apostle Paul; thus did the revolution of 1789-1814 drape itself alternately as Roman Republic and as Roman Empire; nor did the revolution of 1818 know what better to do than to parody at one time the year 1789, at another the revolutionary traditions of 1793-95 Thus does the beginner, who has acquired a new language, keep on translating it back into his own mother tongue; only then has he grasped the spirit of the new language and is able freely to express himself therewith when he moves in it without recollections of the old, and has forgotten in its use his own hereditary tongue.

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> Every demand for the most simple bourgeois financial reform, for the most ordinary liberalism, for the most commonplace republicanism, for the flattest democracy, is forthwith punished as an "assault upon society," and is branded as "Socialism." Finally the High Priests of "Religion and Order" themselves are kicked off their tripods; are fetched out of their beds in the dark; hurried into patrol wagons, thrust into jail or sent into exile; their temple is razed to the ground, their mouths are sealed, their pen is broken, their law torn to pieces in the name of Religion, of Family, of Property, and of Order. Bourgeois, fanatic on the point of "Order," are shot down on their own balconies by drunken soldiers, forfeit their family property, and their houses are bombarded for pastime—all in the name of Property, of Family, of Religion, and of Order. Finally, the refuse of bourgeois society constitutes the "holy phalanx of Order," and the hero Crapulinsky makes his entry into the Tuileries as the "Savior of Society."

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> Orleanists and Legitimists found themselves in the republic beside each other with equal claims. Each side wishing, in opposition to the other, to carry out the restoration of its own royal House, meant nothing else than that each of the two great Interests into which the bourgeoisie is divided—Land and Capital—sought to restore its own supremacy and the subordinacy of the other. We speak of two bourgeois interests because large landed property, despite its feudal coquetry and pride of race, has become completely bourgeois through the development of modern society. Thus did the Tories of England long fancy that they were enthusiastic for the Kingdom, the Church and the beauties of the old English Constitution, until the day of danger wrung from them the admission that their enthusiasm was only for Ground Rent. The

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> The coalized royalists carried on their intrigues against each other in the press, in Ems, in Clarmont—outside of the parliament. Behind the scenes, they don again their old Orleanist and Legitimist liveries, and conduct their old tourneys; on the public stage, however, in their public acts, as a great parliamentary party, they dispose of their respective royal houses with mere courtesies, adjourn "in infinitum" the restoration of the monarchy. Their real business is transacted as Party of Order, i. e., under a Social, not a Political title; as representatives of the bourgeois social system; not as knights of traveling princesses, but as the bourgeois class against the other classes; not as royalists against republicans. Indeed, as party of Order they exercised a more unlimited and harder dominion over the other classes of society than ever before either under the restoration or the July monarchy-a thing possible only under the form of a parliamentary republic, because under this form alone could the two large divisions of the French bourgeoisie be united; in other words, only under this form could they place on the order of business the sovereignty of their class, in lieu of the regime of a privileged faction of the same. If, this notwithstanding, they are seen as the party of Order to insult the republic and express their antipathy for it, it happened not out of royalist traditions only: Instinct taught them that while, indeed, the republic completes their authority, it at the same time undermined their social foundation, in that, without intermediary, without the mask of the crown, without being able to turn aside the national interest by means of its subordinate struggles among its own conflicting elements and with the crown, the republic is compelled to stand up sharp against the subjugated classes, and wrestle with them. It was a sense of weakness that caused them to recoil before the unqualified demands of their own class rule, and to retreat to the less complete, less developed, and, for that very reason, less dangerous forms of the same. As often, on the contrary, as the allied royalists come into conflict with the Pretender who stands before them—with Bonaparte—, as often as they believe their parliamentary omnipotence to be endangered by the Executive, in other words, as often as they must trot out the political title of their authority, they step up as Republicans, not as Royalists—and this is done from the Orleanist Thiers, who warns the National Assembly that the republic divides them least, down to Legitimist Berryer, who, on December 2, 1851, the scarf of the tricolor around him, harangues the people assembled before the Mayor's building of the Tenth Arrondissement, as a tribune in the name of the Republic; the echo, however, derisively answering back to him: "Henry V.! Henry V!" [#3 The candidate of the Bourbons, or Legitimists, for the throne.]

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> The "Society of December 10" was to remain the private army of Bonaparte until he should have succeeded in converting the public Army into a "Society of December 10." Bonaparte made the first attempt in this direction shortly after the adjournment of the National Assembly, and he did so with the money which he had just wrung from it. As a fatalist, he lives devoted to the conviction that there are certain Higher Powers, whom man, particularly the soldier, cannot resist. First among these Powers he numbers cigars and champagne, cold poultry and garlic-sausage. Accordingly, in the apartments of the Elysee, he treated first the officers and under-officers to cigars and champagne, to cold poultry and garlic-sausage. On October 3, he repeats this manoeuvre with the rank and file of the troops by the review of St. Maur; and, on October 10, the same manoeuvre again, upon a larger scale, at the army parade of Satory. The Uncle bore in remembrance the campaigns of Alexander in Asia: the Nephew bore in remembrance the triumphal marches of Bacchus in the same country. Alexander was, indeed, a demigod; but Bacchus was a full-fledged god, and the patron deity, at that, of the "Society of December 10."

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> The parliamentary republic was more than a neutral ground on which the two factions of the French bourgeoisie—Legitimists and Orleanists, large landed property and manufacture—could lodge together with equal rights. It was the indispensable condition for their common reign, the only form of government in which their common class interest could dominate both the claims of their separate factions and all the other classes of society. As royalists, they relapsed into their old antagonism into the struggle for the overlordship of either landed property or of money; and the highest expression of this antagonism, its personification, were the two kings themselves, their dynasties. Hence the resistance of the party of Order to the recall of the Bourbons. The Orleanist Representative Creton moved periodically in 1849, 1850 and 1851 the repeal of the decree of banishment against the royal families; as periodically did the parliament present the spectacle of an Assembly of royalists who stubbornly shut to their banished kings the door through which they could return home. Richard III murdered Henry VI, with the remark that he was too good for this world, and belonged in heaven. They declared France too bad to have her kings back again. Forced by the power of circumstances, they had become republicans, and repeatedly sanctioned the popular mandate that exiled their kings from France. The revision of the Constitution, and circumstances

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> France had, indeed; experienced a sort of commercial crisis in 1851. At the end of February, there was a falling off of exports as compared with 1850; in March, business languished and factories shut down; in April, the condition of the industrial departments seemed as desperate as after the February days; in May, business did not yet pick up; as late as June 28, the reports of the Bank of France revealed through a tremendous increase of deposits and an equal decrease of loans on exchange notes, the standstill of production; not until the middle of October did a steady improvement of business set in. The French bourgeoisie accounted for this stagnation of business with purely political reasons; it imputed the dull times to the strife between the Parliament and the Executive power, to the uncertainty of a provisional form of government, to the alarming prospects of May 2, 1852. I shall not deny that all these causes did depress some branches of industry in Paris and in the Departments. At any rate, this effect of political circumstances was only local and trifling. Is there any other proof needed than that the improvement in business set in at the very time when the political situation was growing worse, when the political horizon was growing darker, and when at every moment a stroke of lightning was expected out of the Elysee—in the middle of October? The French bourgeois, whose "skill, knowledge, mental influence and intellectual resources," reach no further than his nose, could, moreover, during the whole period of the Industrial Exposition in London, have struck with his nose the cause of his own business misery. At the same time that, in France, the factories were being closed, commercial failures broke out in England. While the industrial panic reached its height during April and May in France, in England the commercial panic reached its height in April and May. The same as the French, the English woolen industries suffered, and, as the French, so did the English silk manufacture. Though the English cotton factories went on working, it, nevertheless, was not with the same old profit of 1849 and 1850. The only difference was this: that in France, the crisis was an industrial, in England it was a commercial one; that while in France the factories stood still, they spread themselves in England, but under less favorable circumstances than they had done the years just previous; that, in France, the export, in England, the import trade suffered the heaviest blows. The common cause, which, as a matter of fact, is not to be looked for with-in the bounds of the French political horizon, was obvious. The years 1849 and 1850 were years of the greatest material prosperity, and of an overproduction that did not manifest itself until 1851. This was especially promoted at the beginning of 1851 by the prospect of the Industrial Exposition; and, as special causes, there were added, first, the failure of the cotton crop of 1850 and 1851; second, the certainty of a larger cotton crop than was expected: first, the rise, then the sudden drop; in short, the oscillations of the cotton market. The crop of raw silk in France had been below the average. Finally, the manufacture of woolen goods had received such an increment since 1849, that the production of wool could not keep step with it, and the price of the raw material rose greatly out of proportion to the price of the manufactured goods. Accordingly, we have here in the raw material of three staple articles a threefold material for a commercial crisis. Apart from these special circumstances, the seeming crisis of the year 1851 was, after all, nothing but the halt that overproduction and overspeculation make regularly in the course of the industrial cycle, before pulling all their forces together in order to rush feverishly over the last stretch, and arrive again at their point of departure—the General Commercial Crisis. At such intervals in the history of trade, commercial failures break out in England, while, in France, industry itself is stopped, partly because it is compelled to retreat through the competition of the English, that, at such times becomes resistless in all markets, and partly because, as an industry of luxuries, it is affected with preference by every stoppage of trade. Thus, besides the general crisis, France experiences her own national crises, which, how-ever, are determined by and conditioned upon the general state of the world's market much more than by local French influences. It will not be devoid of interest to contrast the prejudgment of the French bourgeois with the