

CSP
Dec 21, 1893
THE INDEPENDENT

Literature.

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The prompt mention in our list of "Books of the Week" will be considered by us as an equivalent to their publishers for all volumes received. The interests of our readers will guide us in the selection of works for further notice.

NAPOLÉON INTIME.*

OF all the men that ever have lived, Napoleon is incontestably the one concerning whom there is the most published information. Europe's history during half a generation is but a chapter of his biography. That history he himself outlined in his *Bulletins* and commented on in the *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de France* sous Napoléon and in the conversations with Las Cazes reported in the *Mémorial de Ste. Hélène*. His early ways of thinking are displayed in half a dozen youthful publications. The thoughts of his whole lifetime are recorded in the thirty-two stout quarto volumes of his correspondence, which after all contain only about a third part of his extant letters. We have, besides, the reports of his speeches in the Council of State; and we have the *Moniteur* newspaper, of which, from the eighteenth Brumaire, he was virtually the chief editor. To learn of his sayings and doings, day by day, we can consult the printed correspondence and memoirs of a host of persons who were in situations to observe him, such as his two empresses, his brothers Joseph (18 vols.), Louis (2), Jérôme (5), of his adopted son, Eugène de Beauharnais (10), of his family friends, the voluminous Duchesse d'Abrantès (14), Bernadotte to whom (being husband of an old flame) Napoleon made a present of the throne of Sweden, and Lavalette, who had married a Beauharnais; of members of his household, the prefect of the palace, de Bausset (4), the lady of honor, Mme. de Rémusat (5), Joséphine's maid, Mlle. d'Arvillon, his own pages, Marco de St. Hilaire and Ste. Croix, his mameluke Roustan, his valet, Constant (6), of his secretaries, Bourrienne (10), who was also a schoolmate, Méneval (3), Fleury de Chaboulon (2), and the Baron de Fair (6); of ten of his ministers, of seven of his marshals, of sixteen of his generals, and of half a dozen other military men, of as many diplomatists, of as many Englishmen, of four of the coterie of Mme. de Staël, of about thirty miscellaneous persons, and memoirs are still coming out at the rate of two or three a year. Besides these, there are a dozen original works on his childhood and youth.

Is it not true, then, that no other man's life ever was spread before us in so great detail? Besides the above sources of facts, many elaborate analyses of character, founded on this mass of information, are at hand to guide us. A full list of works of independent value on Napoleon. would comprise at least 250 entries of from

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guide us. A full list of works of independent value on Napoleon, would comprise at least 250 entries, of from one to twenty volumes each, and even more. We daily form our judgments of men, and consign them to the back seats of the community, on information not amounting to the thousandth part of what is known about Napoleon. About him, then, some Japanese or Brahman might imagine that the final, solid indisputable truth would surely have been reached, and would be much astonished to learn that students are not even agreed as to the main outlines of his character.

Taine, whose characterization of Napoleon is not quite the most unfavorable, represents him as a man who never did anything not calculated. He, alone among the human race, was entirely unsocial. He never wished to confer pleasure, except for some ulterior, cruel purpose of his own. He never had one spark of family affection. He never knew what love was. He could not conceive of an elevated sentiment, and never once, from the day of his birth in Ajaccio, to that of his death on St. Helen's rock, had he ever experienced a feeling which was disinterested, or which contained a disinterested element. Now, Taine is a psychologist, and presumably would not have represented Napoleon as a miraculous violation of every law of mind, without strong proofs.

On the other hand, here comes M. Arthur Lévy, whose views of human nature are said to be drawn from an experience as a successful plumber of Paris. His book is a solid octavo of nearly seven hundred pages, every one bristling with citations from the surest authorities. He presents twenty facts of testimony to every one of Taine's, and from thrice as many witnesses. He minutely analyzes Napoleon's conduct under no less than ninety-five distinct aspects, giving chapter and verse, at overwhelming length, under each heading. What, then, is the outcome of this learned plumber's studies? Why, that Napoleon was a plain, middle-class gentleman and citizen ruler, the mainspring of his life a sober sense of duty, a man frugal, upright, warm-hearted and respectable, his one fatal weakness being an excessive tenderness that made him easily overpersuaded and too indulgent toward wrongdoers. Singularly enough, every one of his brothers and sisters is painted in colors of the same tone that Taine uses for Napoleon's own portraiture. Napoleon alone of the family was good and virtuous and quite free from worldly ambition. He would have been as great as he was good but for his unfortunate pliancy. Such is M. Lévy's character of Napoleon.

Readers of Scott, Lanfrey and Taine will suspect us of joking. They will hardly be able to conceive that just

• NAPOLEON INTIME. PAR ARTHUR LÉVY. Paris: 1893.

this is really the opinion of any sincere student of Napoleon. Yet it is not only maintained, but supported by myriad facts at all points, in which regard to many of which no unbiassed mind can resist the evidence. We will just abridge a part of what Lévy says upon a single point. Taine had remarked that nobody was ever comfortable or at his ease in Napoleon's company, whose one idea of conversation was to terrify, plague and torture his interlocutor, unless, indeed, he happened to have some ulterior design. Lévy quotes to the contrary the testimony of the illustrious statesman Chateaubriand, of the dramatist Kotzebue, of the great historian Johann von Müller, of the hostile Mme. Récamier, of the celebrated critic known as Stendhal, of his ministers, Mollien and Caulincourt, of the brave Captain Coignet, the publicist Maret, of Marshall Marmont, of General Marbot, of Girardin, of the Comte Philippe P. de Ségur, of General Rupp, of the Secretary Méneval, of the *femme de chambre* Mlle. Avriilon, of the major domo de Bausset, of Prince Metternich, of the page Ste. Croix, of Arnault, the perpetual secretary of the Academy, of the learned statesman, Miot de Melito, of his secretary Fleury de Chaboulon, of his old friend the Duchesse d'Abrantes, of the republican Lareveillière de Lépéaux, of the director Gohier, of the son of the adroit Röderer, of the uncompromising Thibaudeau, of General Savary, of Colonel Sir Neil Campbell, of the Bourbon General Peyrusse, of Sir Frederick Maitland—all of whom speak in the strongest terms of the sweetness, amiability and agreeableness of his conversation. After reading these emphatic testimonies of men who saw him daily, it certainly does seem a little exaggerated to assert, as Taine does, that "he always seemed upon the point of flying at his interlocutor's throat."

But the question arises, How is it possible for such contrary characterizations as those of Taine and Lévy to coexist? The answer is not difficult. On the one hand, there were in Napoleon, as the penetrating eye of Metternich clearly saw, two men, the man of home and domesticity, whom nature made, and the man of France and of ambition, who was self-created. The same thing may be said of every person who has intricate projects to carry out; we see it every day. Now, M. Lévy, as his title-page announces, only busies himself with one of these two characters; and by picking out of several hundred volumes all that illustrates one side of the man, while ignoring the other, he makes a picture on the whole ridiculously false, altho in its separate features true to life.

The cultured scholar Taine falls into no crude form of

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self-deception. But, like most Napoleonographers, he has his political purposes to subserve. In his six-volume work on the "Origins of Contemporary France," he has only seen fit to give one hundred pages to Napoleon, and he gives as his motive for treating of him that "for the comprehension of the outcome, the personal character must first be studied." That is, he will judge of the fruit by the looks of the tree—a common method with partisans. One-fifth of the space is devoted to showing that Napoleon was un-French and talked the language badly. Why enlarge so on that? Because he well knows that the French heart cannot warm to any man distinctly un-French. It is the party advocate who speaks.

For the general outline of Napoleon's character Taine relies most on the memoirs of Chaptal, of Mme. de Staël, and of Mme. de Rémusat—the three most perfidious and subtle of all the libels on the most wonderful man of modern times. Taine had seen the "Souvenirs" of Chaptal in manuscript; and since Chaptal was a man of extraordinary intelligence and force, and on his every page professes worship of Napoleon's greatness, Taine was naturally inclined to accept his account, especially as it well suits Taine's politics. Besides, every writer is inclined to overestimate his own little exclusive mine of information. This year, however, the book has appeared in print, and we can now study it to better advantage, perhaps, than Taine was able to do. The extreme and bitter falsity of its general estimate of Napoleon's social character is demonstrable beyond dispute. The reason for this is also manifest. Chaptal was a genial, emotional whole-souled man. In 1804 he was the Emperor's Minister of the Interior. He was intimately allied with and deeply interested in Mlle. Bourgoïn, of the *Comédie-française*. Napoleon, no doubt finding his conduct scarcely becoming to his office, then prepared one of those theatrical coups, one of those little experiments in moral vivisection to which he was given. It was this: one night, as he and his ministers were working in his cabinet, a lackey came to announce the arrival of Mlle. Bourgoïn. Napoleon sent word that she was to wait. Chaptal rose, gathered up his papers, and brusquely left the room. The same night he wrote his letter of resignation. The impression concerning Napoleon which that moment was imprinted upon Chaptal's soul was one that the reflections of years could only deepen. We must not expect in the "Recollections" of this man to find the cold light of reason.

Mme. de Staël was figuring as a political intriguer—in which quality Napoleon held women to be equally fatal to friends and to foes. Are her statements about Napoleon to be trusted implicitly?

As for Mme. de Rémusat, there can be no doubt that she calculated upon great influence with Bona-

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parte, to say the least; but, she found herself wholly disappointed. She made some mischief afterward by her too active sympathies with Joséphine in all disputes with Napoleon, and her account has certainly a malicious coloring.

So much for Taine's threestand-bys.

Among the many books for the young that have recently poured in upon us we find room to mention *The White Conquerors*, by Kirk Munroe (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, \$1.25), which is a stirring story of Mexico under Montezuma at the time of the Spanish conquest. Mr. Munroe is at his best in this book.—*Woodie Thorpe's Pilgrimage, and Other Stories*, by J. T. Trowbridge, (Boston, Lee & Shepard, \$1.25); a volume containing eleven short stories by a writer who for many year has delighted the boys of America with his wholesome and interesting works.—*Comic Tragedies*, by Jo and Meg (Boston, Roberts Brothers, \$1.50), in which are collected six little plays from the manuscripts of the Alcott sisters. The pieces are somewhat bright and catchy, and have in them the spirit of "Little Women."—*Paul Jones*, by Molly Elliot Seawell (New York, D. Appleton & Co.); a very entertaining book for boys, the story based upon the exploits of the great naval hero, Paul Jones, and written with excellent simplicity.—*Guert Ten Eyck* (Boston, D. Lothrop Company, \$1.50); a stirring story of early times in our country's history, when Indian fighting was a reality. The book is illustrated.—*The Boys of Greenway Court*, by Hezekiah Butterworth (New York, D. Appleton & Co., \$1.50); a tale of the early days of Washington, superbly illustrated. It is a fine, strong romance, which we would recommend to every American boy. To read it is to have a charming experience.—*The Princess Margaret*, by John D. Barry (New York, George M. Allen & Co.); an engaging yet sad story, splendidly illustrated and beautifully printed.—*More English Fairy Tales*, collected and edited by Joseph Jacobs, illustrated by John D. Batton (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$1.75), is a book of fairy stories exquisitely made up. The illustrations, the paper, the print, the binding, everything in charming taste.—*The Chronicles of Fairyland*, by Fergus Hume (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, \$1.50), is another book of fairy tales, with fantastic pictures and clear, open print.—*Randall Davenant. A Tale of the Maharrattus*, by Captain Claude Bray (New York, Frederick Warne & Co., \$2.00), tells a story of India in the eighteenth century. It is based upon historical facts more than upon romance, and is more to English than to American readers;