

Literature.

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.

NAPOLEON INTIME.*

SECOND ARTICLE.

To understand the giants and how they are to be treated—whether worshiped as heroes or banded against as public enemies, or how—is of consequence to society. Now, Napoleon is the typical giant in mind. What, then, was his true nature?

Napoleon Bonaparte was, first and foremost, a Corsican. He said: "I am not a Corsican, as people think"; yet, in truth, that element was predominant. What sort of being, then, was the Corsican of Napoleon's youth? A semi-savage—insensible, rude and blood-thirsty. Having desires of the simplest, not knowing what it was to be undecided as to what he wanted, he pursued his ends by the directest path, that of main force. The word "scruple," if in his lexicon at all, only meant for him a fear of God's vengeance. No doubt, a Corsican of high culture—a Paoli—might rise a little out of this circle of ideas. But Napoleon was not highly cultured; he had scarcely a decent education, except in the military art. He was not much superior to a Tammany brave. At the beginning of the Consulate, he used to call *rentes viagères* "*rentes voyagères*," *amnistie* "*armistice*," and *point culminant* "*point fulminant*." He was not ashamed to learn, and a few years later all this was changed. But native insensibility and rudeness could not so quickly be outgrown. He always was a cruel tease. He would pinch people's ears, by way of caress, until the blood came, unless that be exaggeration. He delighted in making the most painful speeches to ladies. He never failed to remind people of their defects, even in his pleasant moods. To amuse Mme. de Bourrienne, he told her how the young bride of an officer before Toulon, in consequence of a presentiment, had begged him with tears to dispense with her husband's services on one day, how he had sternly refused, and how he had seen the officer literally bisected by a shell. "Bonaparte laughed loudly while he described the occurrence with horrible minuteness." He had no ear nor soul for music. He became restless when the merits of paintings were discussed, though we must remember that those paintings were David's. Doubtless, he could express himself with classic laconism; but it is precisely the strong impassibility of that style that imparts to it its grandeur. He had the finest perceptive faculty; but that must not be

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had the finest perceptive faculty; but that must not be confounded with intense sensibility, which is, on the contrary, unfavorable to discernment. Since Lombroso's researches, it must be allowed that defective sensibility is a vastly significant trait. If it can make some men criminals we may guess that it can make others great tilters of the human beast. We meet this physical insensibility among all those persons whose chief delight is in hard facts, who show a keen appreciation of tangible reality, and who are not to be put off with fine feelings; and Napoleon was one of these.

But the Corsican is by no means a grovelingly selfish being. An honorable obligation is for him the most sacred thing in the world. He is capable, not merely of facing danger for it, but of consecrating to it his whole being, from youth to age. Those who know what vendettas are can testify that, to those who engage in them, they appear in the light of duties. Vendettas imply, too, strong family affection, or, at least, clannishness; and accordingly, clannishness has been remarked as one of the characteristics of Corsicans. It was strong in Napoleon. In garrison at Auxonne, as second lieutenant, wishing to send home something to his mother, he denied himself all amusements and ate but once a day. The following year, being twenty-one years old, he insisted on taking his brother Louis and paying for his board, clothes and education, out of his own pay of \$17.51 a month. This reduced him to penury, and forced him to renounce society. As soon as he became powerful he provided splendidly for all his family, and always tolerated conduct on their part which contributed to his fall. He never forgot an old acquaintance nor failed to help him. Most averse to parting with any of those who had been long near him, he never would suffer the humblest domestic to be discharged from the palace except by himself. With his Corsican clannishness, such a thing would be derogatory to him. Nor can the psychologist doubt that fidelity to the duties of his situation often helped to sustain him in trying circumstances, and through long years of incessant fatigues. What but a sense of propriety could have kept him rigidly economical in his personal expenses, even in the days when he was distributing largesse to his followers with both hands?

Corsicans resemble savages in their deep cunning and mendacity: and in this, it is needless to say, Napoleon was a Corsican among Corsicans. He was always proud of his powers as a liar, and used to tell with delight how, when he was a child, his uncle Fesch used to say he would be sure to govern men, and to govern well, because he never told the truth under any circumstances. Talleyrand exclaimed: "This strange being contrives to feign even the very passions that really move him"—a

* NAPIEON'S INTIMÉ. PAR ARTHUR LÉVY. PARIS: 1863.

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THE INDEPENDENT.

shallow remark, for all public men do that. His cunning involved an instinctive psychology, which had been strengthened by incessant reflection and experimentation. It was scientific savagery. He loved to play tricks on people and cruelly to surprise them. Nor could he resist the temptation to cheat at cards and at chess.

The Corsicans, tho rude and insensible, are, nevertheless, men of volcanic passions, and resound to the whole gamut of human emotion from fiercest to tenderest; and this was true of Napoleon. That he was subject to bursts of rage is admitted by all writers, tho, no doubt, like an angry child, he heightened the performance in order to terrify people. But Taine, following his trusted authorities, maintains that he was incapable of love and, indeed, of every human affection. In fact, Taine agrees with Chaptal in pronouncing that he never experienced a generous sentiment. This, however, is contrary to the Corsican nature. It is contrary to the principles of psychology, by virtue of which no frigid Macchiavelli nor Mephistopheles can have the power to subdue multitudes to his worship. It is equally contrary to the facts of Napoleon's life.

To call Napoleon incapable of love is too absurd to be serious calumny. If ever a young man was self-forgetfully in love, it was Napoleon Bonaparte with Josephine. His acts, his refrénations, his casual expressions dropped to his officers, betray it unmistakably. Subsequently he loved and was beloved by Mme. Walewska. To pronounce him devoid of kindly feelings when Metternich and all who knew his interior testify that he seriously endangered his throne by weak, indulgent laxity toward the faults of friends, is a plain effect of prejudice. He himself repeatedly, in his correspondence, blames his own conduct in this, foretelling its terrible consequences, recognizing his obligation as a public man to abandon his friends to their own crimes, and yet unable to prevail upon himself to do so. Josephine said, "He is tenderer and weaker than anybody has any idea of." The truth is that, like most Corsicans, he was a highly emotional fellow, easily bursting into tears, easily enraged, suffering poignant remorse when he had been unable to control himself, forever struggling to restrain and govern his own passionate nature.

Such are the characters which belong to Napoleon as a Corsican. Passing to those personal to him, we remark first his extraordinary physique. His pulse beat less than sixty times a minute. Redoubtable is the man whose ordinary pulse is sixty, and terrible is his wrath. His extreme nervousness greatly influenced his career. He could not bear to wait, and was one of those who pace the floor when they think. His endurance was so

singular that he could sit in the saddle for twelve, or

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even eighteen hours on a stretch, his brain all the while in intense action, without once dismounting. His conversations with his ministers were so detailed, exhaustive and lengthy, that he tired them all out, and almost broke down the strongest, altho his own activity far exceeded the sum of theirs. Says Chaptal:

"One day the First Consul told me he wished to form a military school at Fontainebleau, and acquainted me with its principal features. He ordered me to draw up the whole in articles, and to bring it betimes next day. I sat up all night about it. In the morning, when he saw it, he pronounced it well enough but incomplete, and presently dictated to me in three hours a project of organization in 517 articles. Verily, a more perfect conception never emanated from head of man."

His power of will was stupendous. An insubordinate subaltern, as a chief he bent everybody beneath a Draconian sway. His own brain had to obey him with the same military discipline. He never permitted himself to think of anything until the proper time came, when its turn did come instantly concentrating upon it the whole stress of his mind, and keeping it before him for as long a time as he chose. Hence, the two characters in him, the natural man and the creation of his volition.

His greatest intellectual capacity was his comprehensive grasp of intricate problems. He was a Paul Morphy, not limited to a particular subject. A markedly mathematical mind, he subjected everything to rapid numerical calculation. He was also a fair geometrician.

His memory was prodigious, his swiftness in assimilating positive facts astounding. It was the incessant activity of his reflections, which (he said) went on continually, in society, at table, in the intervals of dictation while listening so kindly as he always did to what people had to say—it was this, combined with native retentiveness and a Herculean energy of recollection, giving him absolute and instant command of all he had ever pondered over, which doubtless accounted for his seemingly magical presence of mind and prompt comprehension of a new situation. More than one battle was saved to him by the facility with which he adapted himself to altered states of things, and instantly adopted new and complicated plans, without confusion.

Yet this adaptability and readiness of acquisition was mainly confined to positive facts and to matters capable of visual representation, and did not show itself about words, music or other sounds, nor about muscular sensations, nor about sentiments. Italian and French were his only languages. Tho much in Germany, he knew no word of German. He could not hum any familiar air correctly. Again, his movements were not graceful. Notwithstanding his psychological tact, his

under any circumstances, range being contrives to it really move him"—a
on Lévy. Paris: 1852.

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appearance in society was decidedly awkward. He did not dance; he could scarcely handle a pen. So, too, his taste in literature was a little crude. He admired the ranting Corneille, not the accurate Racine. Voltaire, the acknowledged king of French prose, he abominated.

He was pre-eminently a man of imagination. Indeed, he was quite an aerial castle-builder. Only his castles once elaborately erected in air, he had a way of patiently copying them on solid earth. His fancies were neither very elevated nor very artistic; but they intoxicated him. They were dreams of conquest and triumph. They caused his rise, and they caused his fall. They puffed him up and made him rash. He underestimated his enemies; he looked upon his fellow-men as beings inferior to himself, and he despised them.

These seemed to be the chief traits of Napoleon's character. To put them together, the admirable and the vile, in their proper collocation, and reproduce the man would be a theme for the lyre of an epic poet. Napoleon was veritably an epic hero—heroic in his greatness of heart and head, heroic in his brutality, heroic in his abominable mendacity, heroic in the worship of his gospel, heroic in his subjective blending of destiny of France and of self.