

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

Nobody who has lived in modern times has so stirred up the world as Napoleon Bonaparte, upset so many old things and started so many new ones. No man ever lived who had more faith in his own powers - and less respect for those of other men. Also Napoleon had an unusual combination of those personal qualities which excite and interest men. It is nearly a hundred years since he dropped out of active life, but his story is more rather than less thrilling as time goes on.

There was nothing in his birth or schooling or his first activities in life to lead one to expect an unusual career. His family was poor and servile; his father trading on his name and his acquaintances to feed, educate and place his family.

The most promising thing about young Bonaparte was his resentment at his servility and his own flat refusal to participate in it to help himself. Throughout his boyhood in the Island of Corsica where he was born in 1769 - during the six years he spent at school in France and the eight years of intermittent military service which followed his first appointment at the age of sixteen to a second lieutenancy - he lived a tempestuous inner life. Ambition for himself, devotion to his family and love for Corsica, hatred of France, sympathy for the new ideas of human rights which were stirring Europe these sentiments kept the mind and heart of the young officer in tumult and made him waver between allegiance to the land in which he was born and which had trained him; between the career of a soldier which was his passion and a career of money making, in order to educate his brother, settle his sisters and put his mother in a secure position.

It is quite fair, I think, to characterize his early career as that of an adventurer. He was watching for a chance and had determined to take it when it offered itself. It was at a moment when he was in disgrace for having refused the orders of his superior in the army to accept a certain command, that the chance he wanted, came

The Convention in which at that moment the French Government centered, was attacked by the revolting Parisians. Bonaparte had no particular sympathy with the Convention, in fact he had more with the rebels, but when one of his friends in the Government who knew his ability as an artillery officer asked him to take charge of the force protecting the Tuilleries, where the Convention sat, he accepted with hesitation, but having accepted, he did his work with a skill and daring which earned him his first important command that of general-in-chief of the French Army of the Interior. Four months later he was made commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy. The Army which was disputing the conquest of Northern Italy by Austria.

It was a ragged, disgusted and half-revolting Army, this Army of Italy - one which for three years had been characterized mainly for inactivity. Without waiting even for shoes, the new commander started them out swiftly on a campaign which for clever strategy, for rapidity of movement, for dash and courage in attack, was unlike anything Europe had ever seen. In less than two months he drove his opponents from Italy and Lombardy and had the remnant of his Army shut up in Mantua. The Austrians shortly had a new army in the field. It took eight months to defeat it and capture Mantua, but it was accomplished in that period. Austria called her ablest general the Duke of

to avenge her disasters. With half the number Bonaparte advanced to meet the Archduke and drove him step by step to Vienna. After a year and seven months of campaigning General Bonaparte, now twenty-eight years of age signed his first treaty for France. By that treaty he formed a new republic in Northern Italy and made a new eastern frontier for France. Before the treaty, however, he had filled her empty treasury, had loaded her down with famous works of art and had given her a new place in Europe. A place which he had proven he could sustain.

The glory of the Italian campaign thrilled the French people, but it disturbed the politicians in power. Bonaparte saw that if the Government could manage it he would have no further opportunities for distinguishing himself. It was this sense that led him to urge that England - that only nation then in arms against France - be attacked by invading Egypt. The Government consented promptly. It was a way of disposing of Bonaparte. What the Government did not dream, of course, was that Bonaparte with his army, hoped to found an Oriental Kingdom of which he should be the ruler!

But nothing went as he expected. He suffered terrible reverses which he knew the Government at home would use to break his hold on the people; his supplies and information were cut off; his prestige in his own army weakened; his faith in his destiny was shaken. That the effect of this bad fortune was not more than skin-deep was clear enough when he accidentally learned that things were in a very bad way in France; that much of what he had gained in Italy had been lost and that Austria and Russia were preparing an invasion.

Promptly and secretly Bonaparte slipped out of Egypt and before the powers knew of his intention he was in France and the people were welcoming him as their deliverer. He was ready to be just that. It was no great trick for a man of his daring and sagacity, adored by a populace, to overturn a discredited and inefficient Government and make himself a dictator. It was done in a few weeks and France had a new form of Government - a Consulate of which the head was a First Consul and Bonaparte was the first Consul.

The most brilliant and fruitful four years of Napoleon Bonaparte's life followed for it was then that he set out to bring order and peace to a country demoralized and exhausted by generations of plundering by privileged classes followed by a decade of revolution against privileges. France needed new machinery of all kinds and this Bonaparte set out to supply. There were many people who regarded him as a great general but to their amazement he now proved himself a remarkable statesman.

He attacked the question of the national income like a veteran financier. The first matter was re-organizing taxation. He succeeded in distributing the burden more justly than had ever been known in France. The taxes were fixed so that each knew what he had to pay and the inordinate graft which tax collectors and police had enjoyed, was cut off. New financial institutions were devised; among them the Bank of France. The economy he instituted in the Government, the army; his own household, everywhere that his power extended, was rigid and minute, there was no escape. The waste and parasitism which pervaded the country began to give way for the first time since the Revolution.

Industries of all kinds had sickened in the long period of war. Bonaparte undertook their revival by one of the most severe application ever made of the doctrine of Protection - he even attempted to make his women folk wear no goods not made in France. His interest in agriculture was just as keen and his personal suggestion and interference of the same nature. The prosperity of the country was stimulated greatly by the public works Bonaparte undertook. One can go no where in France today without finding them. It was he who set the country at road building - some of the most magnificent highways in Europe were laid out by him, including those over four Alpine passes. He paid great attention to improving harbors. These now at Cherbourg, Harve and Nice, as well as at Flushing and Antwerp Bonaparte planned and began. As for Paris his ambition was boundless and he is responsible for some of its finest features and monuments.

His greatest civil achievement was undoubtedly the codification of the laws and it was the one of which he was the proudest. That he contributed much to the Code Napoleon beside the driving power that insisted that it be promptly put through, there is no doubt. His great contribution was the inestimable one of common sense. He had no patience with meaningless precedents, conventions and technicalities. He wanted laws that everybody could understand and would recognize as necessary and just.

Nothing more daring was undertaken in this period by Bonaparte than his re-establishment of the Catholic Church and his recall of thousands of members of the old regime driven out of the country by the Revolution. It was an attempt to reconcile and restore the two most

powerful enemies of the Revolution, the two which the First Consul knew Europe would never cease to fight to restore to power. There was of course great opposition in radical and republican circles to both ventures.

What Napoleon aimed at was to fit together all the different elements which made France under a government which he should direct and then to impose upon them all peace, industry and loyalty. Considering the character and history of the elements he was working with, the degree of his success is one of the wonders of statecraft. As time went on, however, he was subjected to more and more jealousy, criticism and intrigue. And as he saw his power questioned his grasp tightened. He even began to employ the tactics of despot, espionage, censorship, summary punishments. The upshot of the attacks upon him and of his determination to improve his own will was that in 1804, when he was thirty-five years old he had himself made Emperor of the French. I think that there is no doubt that Napoleon believed that this was the only method by which he could make his position of France in Europe impregnable, but that he was willing to play the Emperor there was no doubt. The dream of a throne where he would rule for the welfare and happiness of everybody concerned no doubt, but rule brilliantly and absolutely, had never left his mind since boyhood - and now it was a fact accomplished.

The spectacle which followed is almost unbelievable. Napoleon with perfect seriousness set about to train himself, his lovable, but vain and unprincipled Empress, Josephine, his selfish and vulgar

At the end of these four years Napoleon saw himself the practical master of Europe - the only nations not subserviant to his power being England which was at least temporarily quiet. He had created an Empire, but what was he to do with it. He had no heir. To provide for one he carried out a plan long considered, he divorced the Empress Josephine and married again. The new Empress was the daughter of the old and now humbled enemy of France, the Empress of Austria. Napoleon apparently believed that on the birth of an heir France would accept him fully and that Europe would cease to fear and resent his power. He was wrong. He had stripped too many of wealth and position; outraged too many social and religious conventions set in motion too many ideas hostile to those that Europe as a whole lived by. His demands on subjects and allies were too heavy and particularly the one which he had most at heart, that no Continental nation should allow a dollar's worth of England's goods to cross its borders. His punishment of those who displeased him, disobeyed his orders were too severe. A revolt against his monstrous assumption was inevitable.

It was with his ally, Russia, that the first break came. That Napoleon was startled by the idea of war with Alexander and sought to prevent it, was certain, but Alexander refused to yield to his demand that the embargo against English goods be enforced. The embargo he had set down as "the fundamental law of the Empire". There was nothing to do but settle it by arms and in the summer of 1812 with an army of 225,000 men, he began a reluctant and hesitating march again

against Russia. It was a campaign of terrible disasters. The Russians retreated before him letting cold and hunger do the work of battles. So effectively did they work that the French army was practically destroyed. The Russian campaign is one of the most appalling in history. It was but the beginning of his over-throw. Alexander raised the cry "deliver Europe". Stein and other liberal minds rallied the youth of the German states in a league, pledged to fight for national freedom. His allies and dependences began to demand the return of lost territories as a price of loyalty - France revolted at the prospects of continued bloodshed. The campaigns thrust upon him by all these forces were fought, but frequently without his old genius.

It was June of 1812 when Napoleon began the Russian campaign - twenty-one months later Paris capitulated to his allied enemies and a few weeks later he had exchanged the greatest Empire modern Europe had seen gathered under one man for the little Island of Elba.

His dramatic escape from Elba, the scurry out of France at news of his arrival of all who had opposed him leaving the coast practically clear for him, the rally of the army and people to him; the immediate attack upon him by the allied powers of Europe; his defeat at Waterloo and speedy exile to St. Helena - make perhaps the most dramatic succession of events in all history and it is not he who loses by the record of them, though it ends in his captivity, for Napoleon a prisoner on an Island 600 miles from land is Napoleon still. He is there because of his conqueror's fear of him. No greater tribute to one man's power was ever paid than that of Europe when under English leadership she consented to confine him.

Island of St. Helena.