

had chosen to become the sovereign of the Elbans because of the gentleness of their manners and the softness of their climate. He selected for Elba a national flag based on an old Tuscan banner; it was white with a red stripe running diagonally across it; on the stripe were three golden bees. "The bees will sting some day," said one of his grenadiers.

A new life had begun for the neglected little island. Even in that backward age the agriculture, the industry, the communications, the education of Elba were all especially backward. Napoleon lost not a moment in getting to work. He had already devoured what reading matter on Elba he could find and knew more about Elba than did the Elbans themselves. Even before his official reception at Porto Ferraio on the day after his arrival he had rowed to the south side of the bay and had begun to spy out the land. A day or two later, at five o'clock in the morning, he was leading a party to the only other natural harbour in Elba, Porto Longone, on the south shore, and was asking eager questions about the iron mines at Rio, a few miles away, about the marble and granite quarries, about the fisheries. Those who came into contact with him heard not a word about his leaving the island. It is, of course, easy to suggest that he was all the time concealing his thoughts and working towards such an end. This is, however, to fail to grasp his character. Napoleon was a sublime opportunist. When, in 1798, he went to Egypt he was uncertain whether he should go on from Egypt to India or turn back through Turkey and attack Europe in the rear. He was only resolved to make some great stroke when the occasion offered. Now, whatever may have been his lingering hopes, he well knew that the remainder of his days might be spent in Elba and he was imperiously determined to reconstruct the life of the island. This was not due, as Sir Neil Campbell, the British commissary in Elba, charges bluntly, to merely selfish aims; a great organizing intelligence such as Napoleon's could not rest when problems for his energy lay before him. Within a few days he had discussed with many farmers sweeping improvements in methods of culture. He planned and at once began the building of new roads. He cleaned Porto Ferraio and made the little place sanitary for the first time in its troubled history; it has continued the tradition and remains one of the cleanest towns in Italy. Elba was to take full advantage of its insular position to attract sea-going commerce and should become one of the shipping centres of the world. She should grow wheat to feed her own people, for, as it was, bread was too dear; she should grow potatoes; the Elbans believed that the chestnut and the olive would not flourish in the island, but he would prove to them that this was an error; Elba, too, should grow the mul-