

# REIGN AND CHARACTER OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

DES IDEES NAPOLEONIENNES; PAR LE PRINCE NAPOLEON LOUIS BONAPARTE.

As an historical essay, as an eulogium on Napoleon and on the past, there is nothing to censure, and not much to gainsay in this work. In a pious tribute from the collateral heir of a great name to the memory of its illustrious founder, one cannot find even a little exaggeration misplaced. The long list of benefits, which it enumerates as procured for France by Napoleon, need be curtailed or questioned in a few particulars; whilst its account of his aims and intentions, derived from family tradition, must be precious and correct. But if this glowing picture of Napoleon's reign be held up for the purpose of comparison with the present and in order to shame it, if the Imperial system of government be recommended as something worthy of repetition and fit to replace the present constitution of France, then indeed we have much not only to criticize, but to contradict.

Napoleon's system, it is almost commonplace to repeat, was a great military system, and nothing else. It was not altogether of his choice. He found war raging, the Conscription in the laws, himself borne to power by the support of the army, and the adhesion of its chiefs, whilst his sole title was that of military success. He was, therefore, obliged to complete what circumstances had begun. He organized the country as one vast barrack, rendering the spirit, aim, and institutions of the laws, all military. The first jacket which a boy put on was a uniform; the first element of his education was to wield a military weapon; the last resource of his age was the pension of an invalid. As to the institutions, in which he aped those of liberal countries, his Senate and his Tribunal, the French themselves know well and avow what forces they were. There was neither liberty of the press, nor of education, nor of thought; and if a few young civilians of talent did rise up, exempt from military spirit, the efforts by which they sought to arrive at distinction show the immense difficulty of their task. Comenin began by translating Horace to prove his harmlessness, and Count Mole exercised his youthful pen in an *Essay on Despotism*.

A regime, in fact, more degrading to free intellect than that of Napoleon could not be found. Its great excuse is, that it was temporary, that it was organized for a certain purpose, and that it was not destined to endure. It is indeed a great blessing and a wise arrangement of Providence, that a vast, agricultural, wealthy, civilized country, cannot be organized long for the purposes of offensive war. For a short time its redundant and unprovided population, in flocking under military banners, form a highly adventurous and formidable army. But when these are consumed, and when continued war takes the corn from the farmer, and the peasant from the plough, the obligation to furnish the military contingent becomes a tax too onerous and too painful to be supported. A poor, a mountainous, or a pastoral country, may indeed supply soldiers as long and as often as they are demanded, but the scanty population and resources of such a country render its warlike propensities little formidable. Thus the uncivilised barbarian has the propensity to invade without the power; the inhabitant of civilized countries may have the power, but not the will, to enter upon the career of conquest at the price of so many sacrifices.

The snows of Russia are accused of having overwhelmed the arms and fortunes of Napoleon. But his system was expiring of itself, or it would have recovered that blow. The Duke of Wellington marks in his dispatches, at the date of the Austrian marriage, the seeds of its decay. The great warriors and able men of the empire, whether generals or civilians, were produced during the republic, and by the all-awakening crisis of the last years of the last century. Napoleon's reign and patronage produced nothing beyond mediocrity in every line, the military not excepted. His latest created marshals marked their conduct by defeat and treason. His last levies no longer possessed the ardour and the staunchness of the republican soldier.

Even considered as a military system, therefore, the regime of Napoleon was not a normal or a permanent one. His political institutions were well adapted for the great aim of concentrating all the wealth and force of the state into the hands of its great ruler, and of claiming public opinion to the ear of the Emperor. But how long this system of *despotisme illustre* would have continued to satisfy the French is very doubtful. The advantages of such a regime, that is to say, of a Dictatorship in favour of liberty, are evident and unquestioned, as long as there are privileged classes to reduce to the just level, as long as there is a social revolution to complete, and new interests to defend. The absolute power of the King of Prussia has swept away the aristocracy of the north of Germany more efficaciously than a Prussian Parliament could have done. The divorce between the aristocracy and the Church, achieved in Austria by Joseph the Second, would have been impossible had the House of Lords and Commons sate at Vienna. In the same sense the reign of Napoleon was most useful as a continuation, under Dictatorial power, of the government and principles of the revolution. The old French aristocracy, had it returned in 1796, had life enough left to rescize privilege and power, whereas Napoleon, by keeping it under wa-

ter twenty years longer, and raising up a new and popular aristocracy in its place, put it beyond the power even of Bourbon Princes to revive aught of aristocracy, except what was harmless and ridiculous. All the benefits which Prince Louis enumerates and attributes to Napoleon, in this sense, as the continuator of the revolution, are correct; are too well known to need being cited; and these benefits extend not merely to France, but to Germany and Italy, whilst subject to French arms.

But whether the system which worked all this good would not have outlived its task and worked evil, is another question. The democracy may allow its interests, its feelings, its power, and its cause, to be concentrated in, and represented by, one eminent individual for a certain time, but not for a dynasty or a life. Prince Louis declares that Napoleon would have become liberal in peace; that he would have given liberty of the press, liberty of election, liberty of all kinds. This is impossible. He could no more have consented to this than he could consent to the dismemberment of the empire. In peace a liberal party must have risen in France, even though the freedom of the press and tribune was denied them; against them, and on the side of the Court, would have been arrayed the military party and the soldiery; and it is no difficult matter to foresee the tendency of these conflicting bodies.

In order to have become more liberal, Napoleon and his dynasty must have undone their past institutions, and not merely reformed, but gone counter to their spirit. Centralization, concentration of all power, influence, and activity, in the hands of the government, form the essence of the Imperial System. From education to snuff-making, all was monopoly therein. Individual effort, private industry, was checked, and nothing allowed that the administrative hand did not set in motion and keep going. The spirit of freedom and of the times, even in France at present, is directly the contrary of all this. The general cry is freedom, freedom of commerce, freedom of education, and the great struggle that of local influence against centralization. In vain does the Government, seeking to follow the old traditions of the Empire, endeavour to be the alpha, the centre of all enterprise. The Chambers and the country resist, and will not entrust the administration even with the making of a railroad. In judicial affairs and legislation, the struggle of the Liberal party is to obtain the jury in political trials and those of the press, to which, of course, the Imperial system is opposed. If a public functionary or a magistrate in France commit any violence or injustice towards a citizen, Napoleon's laws and institutions deny the citizen the right of prosecution unless permission be first obtained from the Conseil d'Etat. This impunity of every one invested with authority is another grievance, which the French Liberals would see removed by substituting English ideas of liberty and jurisprudence for Imperial ones. These are a few hastily chosen instances, out of an host, all of which prove the present tendency of the French to be against the system of government held up for admiration in the *Idees Napoleoniennes*.

But, whilst thus rejecting the system and ideas of Napoleon as unfit and unwise to be recuscitated in the present state, wants and tendencies of the French, we are far from denying the aptness and excellence of the greater number of his institutions for the time that he reigned, and for the cause, whose triumph was his first object. Nay, several, not closely connected with his policy, must long continue to heap benefits on France, and remain as monuments of his genius and enlightened benevolence. His Code, his Institute, and his Normal School, are alone sufficient to render the name of Napoleon immortal.

The great objection, however, to the resuscitation of Napoleonic ideas is, that they are entertained, in France, solely by the war or movement party, whose sole aim is to run once more a muck against Europe, in order to wash out some pretended stains received in 1814 and 1815. To a considerate Frenchman the victories and conquests which illustrated French arms from 1793 to 1810 might suffice to obliterate the stain, if stain it could be considered, of subsequent reverse. But Napoleon's ideas are unfortunately those of domination, and tend directly towards a renewal of that military struggle which convulsed Europe at the commencement of the century. Now it is much to be feared that, whatever be the fortune of such a struggle, its result cannot be propitious to the extension of freedom in Europe, or to its consolidation in France.—*Examiner*.

## FINE ARTS.

A SUMMER'S DAY AT HAMPTON COURT, BEING A GUIDE TO THE PALACE AND GARDENS.—BY EDWARD JESSE, ESQ.

This is an addition to Mr. Jesse's many pleasant manuals of sport and recreation, which, if more of a mere guide book than we expected, is not likely on that account to be less welcome to those for whom it is designed. It is appropriately dedicated to Lord Duncannon, to whose influence we owe the late regulation, by which the public are admitted without reserve to view whatever is curious or interesting within the walls of Hampton Court Palace. It is one of the merits of our present ministry, and not the least, that they have shown themselves anxious to promote, in various ways, the amusement and recreation of the people. They

have their reward in such results as Mr. Jesse properly adverts to in this brief dedication.

"That the privilege conferred on the public is duly estimated by them, is proved by the great accession of visitors who daily avail themselves of the indulgence. The most laborious have their moments of leisure, and to such more especially your lordship has opened a source of innocent recreation, by affording them opportunities of contemplating many works of art and genius, from which they were formerly in a great degree excluded.

"Your lordship in this instance has achieved an object always deemed important by all legislators, by adding to the sum of human enjoyment, and doing what must eventually tend to refine the manners, and raise a taste for higher objects of pursuit among the working classes of the community."

Mr. Jesse prefixes to his detailed account of the palace and its treasures, its pictures and its gardens, a brief sketch of the drive from London. Interesting places are pointed out and pleasant recollections waked up from books. This we may describe as a new chapter to Mrs. Barbauld's instructive sketch of "Eyes and no Eyes, or the Art of Seeing." Mr. Jesse will not have a visitor go to Hampton Court (unless he goes by railway) and see nothing but Hampton Court. This would be travelling with dingy spectacles. There is Kingston House to look at and think of as he goes along, once the abode of the eccentric Duchess of Kingston, now the frequent abiding place of the eccentric Baron Brougham. There is the large red house of the once famous Duchess of Portsmouth, which makes us think of hot suppers and of poor Charles the Second's last indigestion. There is Kensington Palace, the seat of successive monarchs. There is Holland House, the seat of successive wits and statesmen; the picturesque resort of all that has been eminent or interesting in English story or literature for the last two hundred years; the "house of call" for the Fairfaxes, the Warwicks, the Carlises, the Sacklins, the Buckinghams, the Steeles, the Walpoles, the Burkes, the Sheridans; the place where Charles Fox was educated, where Addison died, and where the noble and accomplished biographer of Lope de Vega still happily lives, to grace it with his classical tastes and generous sympathies. Then there is Hammersmith, where Bubb Doddington lived, and Richardson the novelist, and poor Catherine of Braganza the wife of Charles the Second, and rich Mrs. Margaret Hughes the mistress of Prince Rupert, and where there was a ghost, and is a suspension bridge, and, what is still more curious, a convent of real Benedictine nuns. We next pass on to Kew, where old George the Third, Mr. Jesse tells us, was very happy, and, somewhat oddly adds, first heard of the death of his grandfather; but which has more interesting memories for us as the residence of Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester, of Charles Brandon Duke of Suffolk, and of the pleasant Sir Peter Lely; and because in its pretty little churchyard on the green lie the remains of Gainsborough and Zoffany. Why is there no monument to Gainsborough? Richmond breaks upon us next, the delight of every Londoner; with its recollections of our more chivalrous kings, the Edwards and Henrys, who held tournaments there; the abode of Thomson and Collins; and the place where Jeanie Deans and the Duke of Argyle had that famous interview with Queen Caroline. We now pass rapidly up the river banks, thinking of Pope and the Countess of Suffolk, and Lady Mary Wortley, and the Duchess and Wharton, Kitty Clive, and Horace Walpole, till we arrive at the old Palace of Hampton Court built by Cardinal Wolsey.

Here we could not fail to pause, even were it not the end of our journey, for a host of classic memories, a crowd of most worshipful society, fairly arrest us at the door. We will not anticipate the pleasure Mr. Jesse has provided for his visitors by describing one of these. From the "full-blown" dignity of Wolsey who set no bounds to his pomp within the walls, as he afterwards set no bounds to the tears and moans with which he deplored its loss—to

"Thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,  
And sometime's counsel tak'st, and sometimes tea,"

within these same walls aforesaid—all have proper service done them, and a right allegiance rendered. The building is also minutely described, as well in its ancient as its modern state, and the most curious part of this description is the account of Wolsey's withdrawing room. An illustrative catalogue of all the pictures closes the work.

From this catalogue we take one or two extracts to show the kind of notices interspersed, and the interest they possess.

"The two large pictures above the smaller ones represent the embarkation of Henry VIII at Dover, and the meeting of that king and Francis I of France in the field, called the Cloth of Gold, near Calais. The pictures are not only historically very interesting, but a curious fact is connected with one of them.

"After the death of Charles I, the Commonwealth were in treaty with a French agent, who had expressed his desire of purchasing these pictures for the King of France. Philip, Earl of Pembroke, who was a great admirer and an excellent judge of painting, and considered these valuable pictures an honour to an English palace, came privately into the royal apartments, cut out