

THE END

would deplore, between smiles and tears, in Napoleon's presence, his unhappy passion for "cette catin," and the Emperor would laugh at his rueful tirades, being sure of his Lannes. The awe of the others was not ill-founded. Take, for example, this authentic incident: One day at a levée Napoleon sees St Cyr, one of his ablest lieutenants. He goes up to him and says, placidly: "General, you come from Naples?" "Yes, Sire, after giving up the command to General Pérignon, whom you had sent to replace me." "You have, no doubt, received the permission of the Minister of War?" "No, Sire, but I had nothing more to do at Naples." "If within two hours you are not on the road to Naples, I will have you shot on the plain of Grenelle before noon," replied Napoleon, in the same tranquil tone. He rewarded them with titles and appanages, but not with credit. Indeed, "he would have no glory but his own, he only believed in his own talents."

Stendhal, who was a man of genius, and whose opinions are, therefore, worth noting, thinks that one of the two main causes of the fall of the Emperor was this taste for mediocrity. The mediocrity for which Mirabeau is said to have prayed, Napoleon avowedly loved. For of this preference he made no secret. What he wanted was instruments and not ministers. What he feared and disliked was not so much the competition as the ambition and criticism of superior ability. Two men of eminent parts were long in his employment and necessary to his Empire. When he discovered that they were considered indispensable to him, his vigilant egotism took alarm, and he got rid of them. It is difficult in all history to cite a personage more infamous and more loathsome than Fouché. But he was a master of those vile arts which despotism requires in a Minister of Police. He was in truth a