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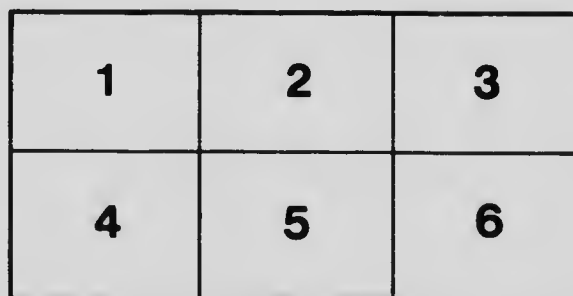
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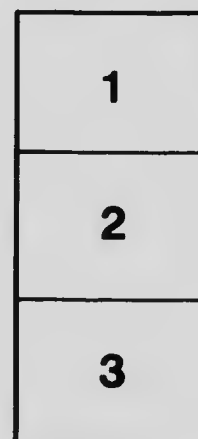
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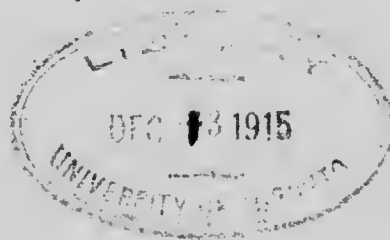
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Elba, a Hundred Years After

by

George M. Wrong, M.A., F.R.S.C.



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Elba, a Hundred Years After.

By GEORGE M. WRONG, M.A., F.R.S.C.

(Read May Meeting, 1915).

There are striking parallels between Napoleon's struggle for world power a hundred years ago and that of Germany a century later. It was only in the period of the Revolution that France had begun to attain a vital national union. The older France had not been really united. Many provinces had come under the sway of the French crown, by conquest or by inheritance; but though they had one ruler they still retained in many respects their old character as separate states. There was not even free trade between these provinces. They had different modes of government, different systems of taxation and of laws. There was, it has been said, a French state but not a French nation. The ferment of the Revolution produced a France "one and indivisible" with an intense national spirit. It was Napoleon who organized this France, who gave it unity of system, and who made its national life a homogeneous reality. Under him France had found a head who directed all the energies of the nation. He did not give France freedom. He was the Emperor of the French, their leader and war-lord. In his mind was the thought that he was the successor of Charlemagne, the great world-ruler. The realm of Charlemagne had stretched eastward far across the Rhine. Napoleon felt called upon to revive this old dominion, for the successor of Charlemagne ought to rule over the territory that Charlemagne had ruled. The Empire thus meant expansion, reunion with peoples who had been separated from it by the incidents and accidents of history.

The Imperial idea involved of course aggression against neighbours. The Empire of Napoleon was military and in military equipment and method was far in advance of any other state of the time. At the head was one of the greatest soldiers of any age, a military genius, who evolved new conceptions of strategy and tactics. An army makes its strength effective, he said, not merely by mass of numbers but by the velocity of its blows. Strike in overwhelming force and strike quickly the enemy's weakest line. Take the initiative and keep it,

so that the enemy must fight not as he wishes but as you wish. The France of a century ago, like the Germany of to-day, led the world in military equipment and efficiency.

In his methods Napoleon showed no pity and no respect for international law. "Such men as I do not commit crimes" he said; "they do what is necessary." He told the Venetians, in 1797, that he would be to them a new Attila, the very phrase that the German Emperor has used of himself. His diplomacy was conscienceless. When he was offering Hanover to Prussia, he was also offering it to England. He violated the neutrality of Spain and marched a hundred thousand troops across that friendly country in order to be able to strike a blow at England. He plundered without restraint and sent to Paris the treasures of art of the conquered countries. His soldiers lived on the people whom they mastered. At times he was guilty of ruthless massacre. He burned villages, executed civilians, and sent hundreds of them into captivity in France. For him international law did not exist.

He was spoiled by success and came to despise all his neighbours. The English are not a military people and he regarded them as mere traders who cared only for their money bags, a nation of shop-keepers. He underestimated the power of his opponents. He took little care to treat possible enemies with diplomatic skill. To him it seemed a matter of slight moment whether one nation more or less was at war with him. In the end, as a result, he was face to face with Europe in arms. England was his arch-enemy—the tyrant of the seas as he called her. He tried to strike England by striking at Egypt. He had the fixed idea that if he could reach England, London would fall in three days and that the British Empire would then be prostrate. He believed that the Irish would help him to conquer England. He even thought that there were elements in the British Empire which would look upon him as a liberator.

In pursuing his ends Napoleon showed no patience or self-restraint. Frederick the Great, with vast ambitions, had yet moved cautiously step by step towards his goal. Napoleon would not leave anything to time. All must be done quickly by the striking of shattering blows. He could conquer people and hold them indefinitely under a military yoke. He had no belief in liberty, no insight into the fact that a strong empire can be built up only by the consent and union of those who compose it. He showed little capacity to estimate rightly political or even military forces. He fought on too extended a line, from the south of Spain to the interior of Russia. He raised up so many enemies that in the end it was certain they would overwhelm

him. They knew his strength. They feared him and offered to compromise if he would abandon his dream of world-conquest. Even after the disaster in Russia it was possible for him to have retained in the north the left bank of the Rhine and in the south Nice and Savoy; but he blindly refused such terms. He would have all or nothing, and in the end his enemies saw that their only safety lay in crushing him completely. His final failure after the return from Elba was due to the universal conviction that he could not be trusted. He had so outraged and violated Europe that Europe would not tolerate even a Napoleonic dynasty. The dream of a Bourbon world power ended with the death of Louis XIV in 1715. That of a Napoleonic supremacy over the world ended at Waterloo in 1815. It is quite possible that the year 1915 will see decisions even more momentous than those of these earlier dates. It seems as if the finger of God has written in large letters at regular intervals across the pages of history the fate which attends the ambition for world-mastery.

Napoleon arrived in Elba on May 3, 1814, and left it on February 26, 1815. By the treaty signed at Paris on April 11, 1814, Elba, which had been under French rule for a time, became a separate and independent state with Napoleon as its despotic sovereign. After a momentary hesitation Elba went into transports at the arrival of its new ruler. The islanders had been given no notice of their destiny. Many of them believed that, in the new settlement of Europe, Elba would go to Great Britain as Malta had gone at an earlier period, and some bold spirits had talked of making a declaration of independence and of building up Elba as a nation. The arrival of Napoleon satisfied, however, the highest aspirations of the Elbans. Not only would the island now be an independent state; the fact that the conqueror of the world had come to rule the Elbans was staggering in its appeal to their pride. The civic officials welcomed Napoleon with florid eloquence. Island poets burst into song. The representative of the Church praised God for this crowning mercy; it would, he said, inundate the island with riches. The people of Elba were only too ready to believe that now for them a new era was dawning. They were to bask in the sunshine of endless prosperity. There should be no more taxes. All injustices should be righted, all grievances remedied. It was said that the Elbans could not have been more enthusiastic if a god had come to dwell among them. The joy was without discrimination, and later, when Napoleon insisted on the payment of taxes, his popularity suffered an eclipse with many of the islanders. But it was a happy multitude which crowded the strand at Porto Ferraio when Napoleon landed. He issued a proclamation saying that he

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-

berry tree and men must be brought to the island who knew how to cultivate it; her fisheries should be developed; she should revive her production of cork and anchovy. Rio needed a harbour and should have it; Napoleon himself went out in a boat, made soundings with the lead, and came back drenched to the skin.

He was not less zealous in regard to military defence. His thoughts dwelt perpetually, indeed, on problems of war. In the end he had in Elba an army of sixteen hundred men. As the total population was only twelve thousand it is clear that about one-half of the adult males of the island were in the army. Most of the men were old soldiers who had come to serve still under Napoleon; but three or four hundred were recruited in Elba. Napoleon would spend five or six hours at a time at the barracks. He talked to the men familiarly, tasted their soup and enquired about their comfort. He had not only an army but also a small navy of five ships. He believed that if attacked in Elba he could retire to the mountains and hold out for two years.

Sir Neil Campbell says that Napoleon seemed like the incarnation of perpetual motion. Lord Ebrington spent an evening with Napoleon alone and the Emperor kept his guest walking up and down in the salie for hours while he talked. When he gave an order he expected it to be carried out instantly. If a road was being built he required to know each day how much had been achieved. He was up often at three o'clock in the morning and he showed little consideration in requiring others to adjust themselves to his own rapid and eccentric movements. "He did what he wished, as he wished, and when he wished" says Pons, one of those in Elba who were driven by this restless master. He wrote little in Elba but read insatiably and complained of the inadequacy of his library. He was always ordering books to replenish it.

It would hardly be accurate to say that Elba still preserves any vivid memory of this imperious master. Napoleon is, indeed, not much in evidence in the island. There is, it is true, one little street in Porte Ferraio with Napoleon's name. But, after all, his sojourn here was brief and the heart of Elba is Italian not French; it is the heroes of modern Italy, Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi and Cavour, whom Elba loves to commemorate. Some streets in Porto Ferraio are named after Italian literary men—Manzoni and Carducci for example. The names one sees are Italian or, in some cases, Spanish. There are still families in Elba who bear the honoured name of Dante, and some with that dishonoured one which came from Spain, Borgia. It was at Porto Longone on the south coast that the Spanish chiefly settled and there to this day are found such names as Perez, Lopez and Rodri-

guez. France's brief sway has left but few traces. Of Napoleon himself the most permanent memorial in Elba is the festival in his honour celebrated on May 5. It is the anniversary of his death in St. Helena.

The iron mines were in operation in Elba two thousand years before Napoleon came and they are still the basis of the chief industry of the island. Their annual output is about 600,000 tons. Across the narrow stretch of the Mediterranean at Piombino are smelting works fed by these mines. Porto Ferraio itself has three great blast furnaces, and a Bessemer steel plant. The tall chimneys standing on the strand of the beautiful bay pour out their black defilement on the air. They may grieve the soul of the artist but they delight that of the trader for they make Elba prosperous. Wages are high in the island. The well known rule applies that in the vicinity of a manufacturing industry the wages of the agricultural labourer advance. Florence has no great industries and, in consequence, the labourers in the lovely vineyards on the hill-side of Fiesole receive two francs a day and count themselves happy. In Elba such labourers are paid as much as four francs a day with a flask of wine added. The island has every evidence of well-being. There are almost no beggars: one sees no bare-footed and ragged children in the villages; work is abundant: the manager of a small estate told me that he could not secure enough men. The people too are proud and independent. The housewife of Porto Ferraio has great difficulty in getting domestic servants, for the Elbans scorn this form of labour.

During Napoleon's stay in Elba he naturally dwelt chiefly at Porto Ferraio. At first he lived in the civic Hotel de Ville; but there he could get no privacy and on the heights between the two hills he reconstructed a house that had been used as a mill and was known as the Mulini. It became for him an imperial palace, for he was still Emperor in Elba. It stands to-day, little changed in structure from what it was in Napoleon's time, but in a pitiable state of neglect and desolation. With some difficulty I found in a neighbouring street the woman who had the key and she seemed frankly amused that I should take an interest in Napoleon. There is only one good room in the house, a *salle* built by Napoleon with four great windows looking out towards the sea and four towards the land. It is empty but for the busts of two Grand Dukes of Tuscany, brothers of Marie Antoinette, and, by an odd turn of fortune, uncles, by marriage, of Napoleon through his wife Marie Louise. The rooms are untidy and uncared for; the kitchen, with its cooking apparatus on a scale truly imperial, is laden with *débris*. I stepped out into the little neglected garden. It is hardly as spacious as the deck of a man of war. There were a

few straggling flowers and a few trees, among them the laurel. I plucked a branch of the laurel leaves which Napoleon so delighted to see on his own brow. A railing encloses the garden at the edge of the cliff and at the base, more than a hundred feet below, the sea was beating in a white foam. Napoleon used to take the steep climb down to bathe in the salt water. From the garden he often watched with a glass the shores of Italy a dozen miles away and also the ships on that unstable element which had baulked so many of his plans.

The Mulini palace was well enough, perched on its rocky height, but it gave little chance for free movement. Napoleon could not stir out without being haunted by petitioners and sightseers. He planned to have residences at every important point on the island. At Porto Longone he made one of the existing houses his own; at Rio he caused Pons, the Director of Mines in the island, to vacate his house and go elsewhere. The place, however, which he made especially his own was the little villa at San Martino, three or four miles from Porto Ferraio. It was to be the St. Cloud to the urban imperial residence of the Mulini. It is perhaps the most beautiful spot in the island. The bay of Porto Ferraio is surrounded by a natural amphitheatre of mountains. Napoleon found a cottage built at the point in this amphitheatre which would correspond to the spot exactly fronting the centre of the stage in a theatre. The mountains curve round the bay on either side and the blue waters, and Porto Ferraio in the near background and the high coast of Italy in the distance, furnish the scenery on which the observer looks. The setting is perfect. Napoleon, barbarian though in many respects he was, had a real eye for beauty. He bought this place, and spent upon it in all about 180,000 francs. He added to the house; but its two floors contain only a dozen rooms. A Russian prince, who had married the daughter of Napoleon's brother Jerome, acquired the property in the course of time, and built on a lower level than the house a great museum for Napoleonic relics. The roof of this museum has been added to the garden of Napoleon's house. The objects formerly in the museum have long been scattered; the great building alone remains and the whole property has passed into the hands of a Florentine gentleman who is generous in allowing visitors to see it.

An avenue lined with richly laden orange trees furnished the approach to the house. I found the caretaker working in a vineyard. Other visitors had been there a few days earlier—some of the officers of the British fleet which had made a visit to Porto Ferraio: the terrible Briton haunts even the memorials of Napoleon! The caretaker unlocked doors for me and opened windows. Here, too, Napoleon built a hall, the size of a modest drawing-room in a country house.

A fountain was arranged in the centre of the room and the walls were decorated with frescoes. They are Egyptian scenes, a memory of Napoleon's sojourn there. At St. Helena he said that the best artists of Italy had competed for the honour of painting the frescoes; but this was one of his many bursts of grandiloquence, for the frescoes are not greatly beyond the resources of a village painter. The dining-room is in front of this hall and has a beautiful view of the bay and of Porto Ferraio. Napoleon's own bedroom is at the right of the dining room as the observer looks towards the bay; Bertrand and Drouot, his faithful companions, had rooms on the left. Minor members of the staff slept in the three or four small rooms on the lower level and there, too, was the imperial kitchen. The food was carried up an outside staircase in the open air and then through the hall to the dining-room. One could hardly imagine an arrangement more inconvenient and Napoleon must often have had the grievance of Louis XV, who, since his food had to travel far before it reached him, could rarely get anything served hot. Napoleon's bathroom on the ground floor below his bedroom is reached by a staircase so narrow that it must have been a trial to his corpulence. On the wall by the bath is a fresco of a naked woman looking at herself in a mirror and the phrase is painted on the wall, "*Qui odit veritatem odit lucem.*" The figure of the woman is not unlike Canova's statue of Napoleon's sister, Pauline.

The lower levels of Elba are warm in summer and by August Napoleon found the heat stifling. The remedy was a flight to the mountains. His realm was, as he said, small, but it did not lack variety. It was on the heights above Marciana that Napoleon took refuge from the heat and thither the visitor to Elba follows him. The road strikes inland from the head of the bay at Porto Ferraio, crosses a high neck of land, and then descends to the open sea on the north shore of the island. The road now used was planned by Napoleon. It is a costly task to create great stretches of highway and Napoleon's means were not equal to his ambitions; but later generations have completed what he began. At times the road winds along the edge of high cliffs from which one looks down upon the surf far below, a gleaming white, bordering the changing blues and greens of the rolling sea beyond it. At Marciana Marina the road comes down to the sea and the great waves dash in at one's feet. This little town has a long and checkered history. There is no harbour but only an open roadstead. Its virile people have long clamoured for the building of a harbour and the work is now going on slowly. It throws some light on Italian politics that an election placard on one of the walls read: "If you want the harbour built, vote for—." One seems to have heard of similar cries elsewhere.

I drove the score of miles to Marciana in a little two-wheeled cart behind a gaunt but strong horse. My driver I found to be a keen politician, a Radical who would go so far in his reconstruction of society as to start with anarchy. When I tried to find out what he meant by anarchy and how it would pave the way to a better order his answers were not illuminating; but this at least was clear, that he was profoundly discontented with things as they are. "There are too many thieves at Rome," he said with conviction. He declared that in a recent election in this constituency the government had spent corruptly three hundred thousand francs on behalf of their candidate. The taxes are an ever-growing burden and nearly everything is taxed. On a four-wheeled vehicle the tax is sixteen francs a year, on one of two wheels eight francs, on each horse six francs, on a donkey or a mule four, on a cow two, on a goat one and a half, and so on. I suggested that modern governments do much for the people by way of education, building roads, and preserving order, and need, therefore, a large revenue; but this explanation did not satisfy him. "It is kings that are costly," he said, "what we need in Italy is a republic." I told him that I thought I could name two great republics in modern times which are even more costly than monarchies; but he would not be convinced. He had words of approval for the policy of Napoleon. The Emperor, he said, was right in trying to build Europe into one great realm. There should be but one state. In this all men would be united; that vile thing patriotism would disappear; and there would be no more war. I do not think that this Elban Radical represents a powerful section of his countrymen, for the monarchy is generally popular in Italy, even surprisingly so when we consider that the reigning house has been for so short a time connected with most of the people over whom it rules. But the republican propaganda is open and avowed. Perhaps this fact only shows that the monarchy is so strong that it does not fear attack.

We met on the road the great motor omnibus now in use for mails and passengers; there are no private motor cars in Elba. A primitive mode of conveyance is still general. The donkey is traditionally a patient and strong little beast and in Elba he has need of both qualities. We passed a donkey with only his legs visible; the rest of his body was concealed by his burden of an old man, an old woman and two immense paniers. Sometimes a couple of children are added. It is wonderful that the slim little legs can patter along under so heavy a load. The people whom one meets are invariably well dressed. The women are surprisingly handsome; in the faces of most of the old women even there are traces of earlier beauty; Cupid must be busy in Elba.

It was not at Marciana on the sea-shore that Napoleon found his summer haven but at Marciana Alta, Marciana on the mountain. It is perched high up, not far from the jagged ridge of granite which marks the sky line. The grey stone houses as seen from below are numerous enough to indicate a considerable village, clinging like a human nest to the rock. Even down to the nineteenth century the coasts of Elba were haunted by pirates from the Moorish sea-ports in North Africa. When the alarm was raised, and to fight seemed futile, the inhabitants of Marciana Marina seized their valuables and made the long climb up the mountain side to Marciana Alta. There they remained until the danger was past. The high village served, too, as a refuge from the heat of summer. It thus happened that families often had two houses, one by the sea, the other on the mountain. In some measure the practice endures still. Except at times of festival, Marciana Alta is almost a deserted village. The men and often the women are away at work elsewhere. Those who farm have a house on their little bit of land far from the village. Usually they stay there at their tasks, but for festivals they come back to Marciana Alta or its neighbour Poggio about a mile away. My companion was eloquent upon the joys of life in Marciana Alta when its inhabitants return for a *festa*.

The road winds up to the high village in a steep and complex zigzag until one looks down on the sea three thousand feet below. The scattered houses and trees on the mountain side, the brown earth, the human occupants working in the vineyards, and, colouring all, the sparkling Mediterranean, unite to form a beautiful scene. Marciana Alta, when we reach it, proves to be enclosed in a strong wall and this shows that even its height on the mountain did not suffice alone to protect it from the marauder. Its streets are a confused tangle of narrow stone passages and stairs. At first the village appears deserted; but an occasional head peering from a window shows that the arrival of the strangers has been noted. In time two or three curious boys are in evidence. The horse is taken out of the cart and put in an empty stable, for a wheeled vehicle can no farther go. The boys are eager to carry the luncheon basket, and we set out with them upon our farther climb up the mountain, for Napoleon went beyond the village to a more remote and lonely spot.

The road now resembles an ancient walking place of giants. It is made of heavy stones thrown down roughly like an old Roman road. Possibly this pavement of boulders was laid in Roman or even in Etruscan days. Napoleon was short and stout and, if he walked, he must have found distressing this climb of nearly a mile up to the Hermitage where he dwelt. It could be done, however, on horse-back.

The piety of an earlier age has erected a dozen little stone shelters at regular intervals along the route. Once they held crosses and were places for devotion; but now the crosses and the prayers have alike ceased to be, a sign perhaps of the spirit of this age. The end of the walk is at a chapel in honour of the virgin. Close to the chapel is a long stone dwelling of four or five rooms. This is the Hermitage. The "hermit" is an old man, dwelling here with his wife, caring for the chapel and living on the alms of visitors.

Hither came Napoleon for a part of August and September, 1814. It is a wild and rugged spot. To supplement the rooms in the Hermitage he brought with him military tents and they were put up on the few patches of ground not cumbered with granite boulders. There was always work to be done when Napoleon was about. He had, after all, a little realm to rule and messengers were coming and going all the time that he was here. Many letters written from "La Madone" have been preserved in his Correspondence. Some of them are long and minute in regard to petty details of administration; all show a perfect clearness of intellect and an eye that saw everything, big and little. The opinion that, by this time, disease had undermined Napoleon's powers is surely unfounded; no intelligence could have been more alert and fruitful than his appeared to be in Elba. His activity even at La Madone was ceaseless. He went out shooting on these rugged heights; he visited spots of interest in the neighbourhood; he superintended the planting of trees. Though he was not much given to introspection, one thing here was likely to call up memories. A few hundred yards beyond La Madone the stony path comes to the high point on Mount Capanne where the view to the west is unbroken. There, forty miles away, lies the long, high, sombre mass of the island of Corsica. I saw it when it was misty and black in the distance. Napoleon must have looked upon it when its lofty peaks, rising eight thousand feet from the sea, were gleaming in the sunlight. It was less than twenty years since "the whiff of grape shot" directed against the Church of St. Roch in Paris had brought him fame. Assuredly he had been the chief actor in amazing scenes since Corsica had ceased to be his home.

The two members of Napoleon's family who came to live in Elba were singularly different in type. His mother Madame Mère had remained at heart the member of a Corsican clan with clannish feelings like those sometimes shown by a Highland Scot. She was a majestic and rather terrible person in demeanour, a veritable mother of him who had made himself a king of kings. Visitors stood in even greater awe of her than of the Emperor. Napoleon furnished her with a

separate house and establishment. In manner of speech, in habits, and in outlook she was so unchanged from the time of her youth in Corsica that it might well have seemed as if she had never left Ajaccio. She tried to have Pons removed from his post, to be replaced by a Corsican. When two companies, one Genoese the other Corsican, competed for a monopoly in Elba in respect to the export of minerals, she worked to secure the privilege for the Corsican. Her servants, her cooking, her mode of life were Italian. She rarely invited anyone to her table, and rarely went out except to spend her evenings with her son. Napoleon's sister, the Princess Borghese, "the nymph Pauline" was of quite another type. She was in spirit a Pagan Greek. Notwithstanding the manifold scandals of her private life she was loyally devoted to her brother and her generous and impulsive nature possessed great charm. She could not be happy without trying to make those about her happy. At the Mulini she turned a former stable into a theatre and trained a company of amateur players. The little theatre has now relapsed into its primitive condition.

It was a strange gathering of people whom Napoleon collected about him. General Drouot, the director of military affairs, was a man of great rectitude of character. He was very devout and, to the surprise, almost to the scandal, of his fellow officers, carried the Bible with him and constantly read it. As a soldier Drouot was something of a martinet. He had, indeed, his softer side and, though he was already becoming a grey-haired veteran, he fell in love with a young Elban lady. When, however, he wrote to his mother to announce his happiness, her reply was to forbid the marriage, and filial piety led him to obey the admonition. The feelings of the jilted young lady were soothed and in the end she made a prosperous union. Every kind of person haunted Porto Ferraio. Old companions in arms came looking for work; persons with grievances threw petitions into Napoleon's carriage; one woman threw herself under the feet of his horse to ensure attention; women of rank, some of them English, came to see and admire the great man; courtesans came to ogle him; and assassins, dressed sometimes as officers or priests, lay in wait to kill him. Less and less as time went on did Elba seem to be the land of the blessed.

At first, however, Napoleon seemed perfectly content in Elba. For more than two years he had scarcely known rest. After the strain and horror of the Russian campaign, after the succession of terrible battles with the allies which had followed and which had brought his ruin in the end, Elba may well have seemed a paradise of quiet for a tired man. Exhausted nature craved for repose and repose was all the more delightful because he had come to Elba in the beauty of the spring time. But we all know that for men accustomed to active life

retirement soon becomes oppressive. The court at Elba must have bored Napoleon to desperation. With an imperfect sense of humour he tried to keep up the regal etiquette of the Tuileries. Only some fifty island bourgeois were eligible for the court circle, and the hands of some of them were so horny with toil that they could not draw on gloves. Campbell saw, among the elect, the seamstress who had repaired his uniform. Elba was miserably poor and the courtiers found it hard to keep the pace required of them. Incomes remained small but prices went up and the usurer was called on to redress the balance. Napoleon, like his great rival Wellington, had no small talk. When ladies were presented to him he asked them abrupt questions about their fathers if they were unmarried, and about the number of their children if they were married. He carried an absurd pomp even into religious ceremonies which he attended in state. He thought, as he said, that this was necessary to keep up his imperial dignity and to impress the world.

At times, Napoleon's dignity in Elba suffered woefully. Among those who came into daily touch with him was Pons de l'Hérault. He was a Frenchman, an old soldier and a rugged republican. He had been director of Mines in Elba before Napoleon's time and continued to hold that office. Pons had a prickly conscience and the courage to stand out for its dictates. Napoleon wished him to hand over all the moneys derived from the profits of the mines. Pons declared that the balance in his hands at the time Napoleon became sovereign of Elba did not belong to Napoleon but to the French Legion of Honour which had been granted this source of income. One day Napoleon sent word that he was coming to the mines and Pons knew that he was to have the struggle of his life. The Emperor came in with a stern face. He sat at one end of a long table. Pons sat at the other end facing him. General Bertrand was on the right, Peyrusse, Napoleon's treasurer, on the left. Napoleon began by saying that the funds in question were Government property and that all Government property in Elba belonged to him. The answer of Pons was that up to April 11, when Napoleon became ruler of Elba, the funds from the mines belonged to the Legion of Honour.

"You will do what I tell you to do," said Napoleon.

"I will not," said Pons.

"Sir, I am always Emperor," said Napoleon.

"And I, sire, am always a Frenchman," answered Pons.

"You have been ordered," said Napoleon, "to hand over the funds and you refused to obey."

"I have received no such order, but if I had I should not have executed it and I ought to tell your majesty so . . . I will do nothing against my conscience."

It is to the credit of Napoleon, that, in spite of this rebuff, he treasured no rancour against Pons. They became fast friends. At times, Pons acted as Napoleon's secretary. The Emperor had practically forgotten how to write and called upon any one at hand to take down his words. Pons was distressed that he could not write fast enough but Bertrand told him that his own practice was to catch the sense of what the Emperor said and to put it in his own words, a liberty that shocked Pons. Yet he rather delighted in exhibiting to the Emperor his stiff republicanism. But Pons, like so many others, was conquered by the fascination of the master-will and he followed Napoleon back to France.

It is Pons who has recorded the most elaborate notes of Napoleon's life in Elba. He declares that only in this narrower scene could the Emperor be really studied. The result of this study is certainly the drawing of a complex character. Taine said that Napoleon had the moral outlook of an Italian of the fifteenth century, that is of a Borgia or of a Lorenzo de Medici. Side by side with this we should remember that the early Napoleon was undoubtedly a young man of austere life, who made great sacrifices in his honourable poverty to help the other members of his family, sacrifices which received from them but scant recognition. It is, of course, prosperity and not adversity which chiefly tries character and the prosperous Napoleon suffered a moral decline. Pons, a man of rigorous virtue, finds something, but not much, to blame in Napoleon. He only hints at sexual vices. Oddly enough Pons is most emphatic in blaming Napoleon's love of petty gossip, his eagerness to know what people are saying and his weakness in being influenced by it. He had, too, no mastery over his temper. There is a story that when he was annoyed in Elba at the binding of some books which had not been properly decorated with the imperial "N", he flew into a furious passion and even called in soldiers to tear the books in pieces with their bayonets. Both Pons and Campbell agree in saying that Napoleon had no control of his tongue. Often he spoke such biting words that some of his victims could never forgive him; on the other hand, he showed contrition after such outbursts and seemed anxious to make amends. He could not bear to be beaten at anything, even at cards; that would be, to his singular superstition, an omen of disaster; accordingly he cheated in order to win. He showed a truly Corsican parsimony in money matters; spoiled flour which his soldiers would not eat he forced, in spite of the protests of Pons, on the miners at Rio; one hundred of them fell ill, and all were bitterly indignant. For the rights of property he cared nothing. A sister had a furnished palace at Piombino. He sent over a vessel and stripped the house for his own use in Elba. His

brother-in-law, Prince Borghese, sent south by ship the furniture of a palace at Turin. When the ship was driven into Porto Longoue by a storm Napoleon took all the furniture. "It does not go out of the family," he said. But even when he was a robber his love of order appeared; he caused accurate inventories of his stealings to be made.

For the rest, here, according to Pons, is a truly admirable man. He has a devouring mental curiosity. When he sees a ship drawn up on the shore, he wants to know how it has been brought there, how it is put in the water, how it is handled in a storm. He has the will to create; "We shall see," he says, when Pons speaks doubtfully about doing anything considerable for fisheries, commerce, agriculture and forestry in the island. He is magnanimous; he treasures no rancour against those who oppose him honestly. For England, his great foe, he has, in Elba, words of generous praise, and he likes Englishmen; it was St. Helena which embittered him against the island state. At Elba Napoleon believed that he had many supporters in England: "Upright Englishmen honour me. If I went to England the Government would fear my influence and would force me to leave." In this saying Napoleon showed the lack of imagination which was, perhaps, the chief cause of his ruin, for, owing to this defect, he could never realize the vigour of national feeling. He took too seriously the party cries of the *Morning Chronicle* and other Whig utterances in which he was only a weapon to smite the Tories. Himself a man almost without a country, he could not understand that, against the foreigner, all Englishmen would unite. To our surprise we find Napoleon emotional. When his mother and his sister Pauline arrive in Elba he sheds tears of joy; Pons adds admiringly that he had shed no tear of grief when he lost an empire. One day, in turning over a bundle of newly-arrived prints, he comes upon portraits of Marie Louise and their son, and is moved so deeply as to startle every one in the room. Perplexing or bad news makes him morose and silent; when, on the other hand, he is merry or interested, he has the contagious enthusiasm of an eager boy; on one day he sits through dinner without a word; on the next he talks volubly of his campaigns. When work is being done in his house, he is among the workmen from morning to night. He cannot wait for the plaster to dry at the Mulini but moves in despite the protests of his physician. It is the sign of a fine spirit that he takes delight in the beauties of nature. He has singular dislikes. Black he cannot endure; it is the colour of death; white too he detests; it is in white that the victim for the sacrifice is arrayed. Though without religious emotion he still thinks the attending of mass has somehow a bearing on his own well-being.

Winter drew on and no word fell from Napoleon that he was other than resolved to end his days in Elba. Meanwhile the restored Bourbon rule in France was steadily helping the cause of its enemies. Men were found to say in blind adulation that when God made Louis XVIII He paused for rest after labour so great. Officers who had served under Napoleon were objects of scorn and contempt and were dismissed by hundreds and even thousands from the army. Their men were treated with similar derision. The returned nobles began to clamour for the revival of the feudal rights over the peasantry which they had enjoyed before the Revolution. They alarmed the thousands of innocent purchasers of lands, which had been seized and sold during the revolution, by demanding that these new owners should be dispossessed. The restored royalists indulged in many foolish acts of revenge. The restored Church was eager to persecute those who had raised their hands against it. From all this came a state of opinion which would have alarmed any but the blind and the deaf. Soldiers and peasants in France were alike growing eager for a change, and were turning in thought to the old leader. Napoleon knew what was happening in France. Newspapers came freely and there was constant communication with the Continent.

Nothing was spared by an incredibly stupid government to make Napoleon resolve to attempt his own restoration. By a truly barbarous tyranny his wife and his son were not allowed to go to him. It was openly debated at the Congress of Vienna whether, for greater safety, he should not be sent to some remoter island. In this connection the ominous name of St. Helena was already mentioned. St. Lucia, too, was suggested on the ground that the deadly climate would soon kill him. High circles made it quite clear that his assassination would be welcome, and base hirelings lurked even in his garden, awaiting a chance to kill him. Though Napoleon could easily have frustrated so wild a plan, it is quite certain that encouragement was given to Moorish pirates to make a sudden descent upon the island and kidnap him. The island swarmed with spies and some of them lived in the domestic circle at the Mulini. The treaty made with him was not regarded as binding. Though by it he was to have an income of 2,000,000 francs a year, France was fatuous enough to break faith and to pay nothing; Talleyrand said it would be folly to give Napoleon the means to carry on new intrigues. He had taken about 4,000,000 francs to Elba. This was a small sum for a sovereign, and he was soon face to face with dire poverty. He reduced some of the meagre salaries of his officials; he sold off part of his stable; he cut down the scale of his receptions and, in a hundred ways, with the Corsican frugality of his early youth, tried to live within his means.

But he could not administer the island and keep up his little army and navy without resources from outside. There was no prospect that these would come and he was face to face with the danger of an empty treasury.

Probably the exact nature of the attempt he should make at restoration was dim in Napoleon's mind until almost the moment of departure. Italy was a promising field for effort, for he had been King of Italy; and the Italians, in their renewed disunion under the aegis of hated Austria, turned in thought to the man who, with all his faults, had given them their first breath of national life. But it was in France that grievances against the restored rule were most acute and to France he returned. He did not set out from Elba until Sunday, February 26; but on Friday the 24th, the Elbans knew that he was going away. On that day couriers were sent all over the island to prevent any one from leaving. Even fishing boats might not go out. There were many spies in Elba. One of these, a professed oil merchant, tells us that he tried to get away on the 25th but was sternly called back when he had induced a fisherman to make a start. All Elba knew that Napoleon was going before his mother and his sister were told. But his bearing was so read by his mother's instinct on Saturday night, February 25, that she questioned him and he told her. She only said, after a pause, that she thought his repose in Elba unworthy of him, and expressed the hope that if he must perish he would die not by poison, but with his sword in his hand. On Sunday morning Napoleon went to mass. He had already received farewell official visits, and had provided for the government of the island during his absence. He was taking with him not only his old soldiers from France but also some Elban recruits. On that Sunday afternoon, mothers, sisters and sweethearts stood on the quays to bid farewell to those who put off in small boats to the ships that lay at anchor in the harbour. Pons says that there was no weeping; there was only a silent tension, a *tristesse*, of saddening fears and high hopes. Men of Elba were now going off to follow Napoleon, as, according to Virgil, three hundred of them had gone more than two thousand years earlier to follow Æneas. An adverse wind delayed the ships in getting out of the harbour. It was after midnight of the 26th when they had gone; by noon on Monday there was no sight of them on the horizon.

Elba mourned to see Napoleon go. Elban traders had serious reasons to regret many of the departed warriors, for they went off heavily in debt; but the island had had ten months which were to remain forever vital in its history. Napoleon had gone, but his work

remained. Under the hammer of his energy the old Elba had been shattered. After his fall the island was annexed to Tuscany, a natural political tie, and was ruled by the brother of Marie Antoinette. No longer was it divided among three or four Italian states. For the hundred years that have followed, Elba has been happy in having few annals. When the movement for Italian unity developed, Elba shared the enthusiasm for the leadership of Victor Emmanuel and, as a part of Tuscany, accepted him as sovereign in 1860. Ten years later the Elbans saw a chance to revive a tie with the house of Bonaparte. After Sedan they offered the fallen Emperor Napoleon III as asylum in the island. He replied courteously to the official letter sent to him from Porto Ferrajo, but the Elbans had overrated the attractions of their island, and he preferred England. The island has now about 30,000 inhabitants, nearly three times as many as it had in the days of its imperial ruler. They have keen strife; there are clericals and anti-clericals, monarchists and republicans, conservatives and socialists; but this is only to say that Elba is a microcosm of Italy. It has never had any great landed proprietor; the holdings are small and the people are, in a rustic way, extremely well to do. Elba is, indeed, a good example of the proud independence which the ownership of land brings to a peasantry. Some of Napoleon's hopes have not been realized. The olive and the mulberry do not flourish in Elba as he hoped they would; Marciana and Rio still lack the harbours which he planned; and Elba is not yet the home for sculpture which he thought its excellent marble might help to make it. But, even if Napoleon is only a vague saint in the Elban calendar, his achievements are real enough.

