NAPOLEON INTIME.

SECOND ARTICLE.

To understand the giants and how they are to be treated—whether worshiped as heroes or hated against as public enemies, or how—is of consequence to society. Now, Napoleon is the typical giant in mind. What, then, was his true nature?

Napoleon Bonaparte was, first and foremost, a Corsican. He said: "I am not a Corsican, as people think; yet, in truth, that element was predominant. What sort of being, then, was the Corsican of Napoleon's youth? A semi-savage—senseless, rude and blood-thirsty. Having desires of the simplest, not knowing what it was to be undecided as to what he wanted, he pursued his ends by the directest path, that of main force. The word "scrape," it in his lexicon as all, only meant for him a fear of God's vengeance. No doubt, a Corsican of high culture—a Paoli—might rise a little out of this circle of ideas. But Napoleon was not highly cultured; he had scarcely a decent education, except in the military art. He was not much superior to a Tainmanny brave. At the beginning of the Consulate, he used to call rentes viagères "rentes voyageuses," annuité "armistice," and point culminant "point fulminant." He was not ashamed to learn, and a few years later all this was changed. But native insensibility and rudeness could not so quickly be outgrown. He always was a cruel task. He would pinch people's ears, by way of express, until the blood came, unless that be exaggeration. He delighted in making the most painful speeches to ladies. He never failed to remind people of their defects, even in his pleasant moods. To amuse Mme. de Bourrienne, he told her how the young bride of an officer before Toulon, in consequence of a peevishness, had begged him with tears to disengage with her husband's serenades on one day, how he had sternly refused, and how he had seen the officer literally bewitched by a shell. "Bonaparte laughed loudly while he described the occurrence, with a terrible minuteness." He had no ear nor soul for music. He became restless when the merits of paintings were discussed, tho we must remember that those paintings were David's. Doubtless, he could express himself with classic lucidity; but it is precisely the strong impassibility of that style that imparts to it its grandeur. He had the finest terrene faculty; but that must not be
had the finest perceptive faculty; but that must not be confounded with intense sensibility, which is, on the contrary, unfavorable to discernment. Since Lavoisier's researches, it must be allowed that defective sensibility is a vastly significant trait. If it can make some men criminals, we may guess that it can make others great names of the human heart. We meet this physical sensibility among all those persons whose chief delight is in hard facts, who show a keen appreciation of tangible reality, and who are not to be put off with fine feelings; and Napoleon was one of these.

But the Corsican is by no means a crossfireingly selfish being. An honorable obligation is for him the most sacred thing in the world. He is capable, not merely of facing danger for it, but of conserving to it his whole being, from youth to age. Those who know what vendettas can testify that, to those who engage in them, they appear in the light of duties. Vendettas imply, too, strong family affection, or, at least, chivalries; and accordingly, chivalries have been remarked as one of the characteristics of Corsicans. It was strong in Napoleon. In garrison at Aix, as second lieutenant, wishing to send home something to his mother, he denied himself all amusements and ate but once a day. The following year, being twenty-one years old, he insisted on taking his brother Louis and paying for his board, clothes, and education, of his own pay of £15.3s. a month. This reduced him to penury, and forced him to renounce society. As soon as he became powerful he provided splendidly for all his family, and always tolerated conduct on their part which contributed to his fall. He never forgot an old acquaintance nor failed to help him. Most severe in parting with any of those who had been long near him, he would never suffer the humblest domestic to be discharged from the palace except by himself. With his Corsican chivalries, such a thing would be derogatory to him. Nor can the psychologists doubt that fidelity to the duties of his situation often helped to sustain him in trying circumstances, and through long years of incessant fatigue. What a sense of propriety could have kept him rigidly economical in his personal expenses, even in the days when he was distributing larges to his followers with both hands? Corsicans revere savages in their deep cunning and mendicity: and in this, it is needless to say, Napoleon was a Corsican among Corsicans. He was always proud of his powers as a liar, and used to tell with delight how, when he was a child, his uncle Ench used to say he would be sure to govern men, and to govern well, because he never told the truth under any circumstances. Talleyrand exclaimed: "This strange being contrives to feign even the very passions that really move him."—

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George

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appearance in society was decidedly awkward. He did not dance; he could scarcely handle a pen. So, too, his taste in literature was a little crude. He admired the ranking Corneille, not the accurate Racine. Voltaire, the acknowledged king of French prose, he abominated.

He was pre-eminently a man of imagination. Indeed, he was quite an aerial castle-builder. Only his castles were elaborately erected in air, he had a way of patiently copying them on solid earth. His fancies were neither very elevated nor very artistic; but they intoxicated him. They were dreams of conquest and triumph. They caused his rise, and they caused his fall. They puffed him up and made him rash. He underestimated his enemies; he looked upon his fellow-men as beings inferior to himself, and he despised them.

These seemed to be the chief traits of Napoleon's character. To put them together, the admirable and the vile, in their proper complexion, and reproduce the man would be a theme for the lyre of an epic poet. Napoleon was veritably an epic hero—heroic in his greatness of heart and head, heroic in his brutality, heroic in his incomparable mendacity, heroic in the worship of his god, and heroic in his subjective blending of destiny of France and of self.