CHAPTER XXXI

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Mr. Alison has found it necessary to devote ten large octavo volumes to the life and times of Napoleon Bonaparte; nor can the varied events connected with his brilliant career be satisfactorily described in fewer volumes. The limits of this work will not, however, permit a notice extending beyond a few pages. Who, then, even among those for whom this History is especially designed, will be satisfied with our brief review? But only a brief allusion to very great events can be made; for it is preposterous to attempt to condense the life of the greatest actor on the stage of rea. tragedy in a single chapter. And yet there is a uniformity in nearly all of the scenes in which he appears. The history of war is ever the same — the exhibition of excited passions, of restless ambition, of dazzling spectacles of strife, pomp, and glory. Pillage, oppression, misery, crime, despair, ruin, and death — such are the evils necessarily attendant on all war, even glorious war, when men fight for their homes, for their altars, or for great ideas. The details of war are exciting, but painful. We are most powerfully reminded of our degeneracy, of our misfortunes, of the Great Destroyer. The "Angel Death" appears before us, in grim terrors, punishing men for crimes. But while war is so awful, and attended with all the evils of which we can conceive, or which it is the doom of man to suffer, yet warriors are not necessarily the enemies of mankind. They are the instruments of the Almighty to scourge a wicked world, or to bring, out of disaster and suffering, great and permanent blessings to the human race.

Napoleon is contemplated by historians in both those lights. The English look upon him, generally, as an ambitious usurper, who aimed to erect a universal empire upon universal ruin; as an Alexander, a Cæsar, an Attila, a Charles XII. The French nation regard him almost as a deity, as a messenger of good, as a great

conqueror, who fought for light and freedom. But he was not the worst or the best of warriors. His extraordinary and astonishing energies were called into exercise by the circumstances of the times; and he, taking advantage of both ideas and circumstances, attempted to rear a majestic throne, and advance the glory of the country, of which he made himself the absolute ruler. His nature was not sanguinary, or cruel, or revengeful; but few conquerors have ever committed crimes on a greater scale, or were more unscrupulous in using any means, lawful or unlawful, to accomplish a great end. Napoleon had enlightened views, and wished to advance the real interests of the French nation, but not until he had climbed to the summit of power, and realized all those dreams which a most inordinate ambition had excited. He doubtless rescued his country from the dangers which menaced it from foreign invasion; but his conquests and his designs led to still greater combinations, and these, demanding for their support the united energies of Christendom, deluged the world with blood. Napoleon, to an extraordinary degree, realized the objects to which he had aspired; but these were not long enjoyed, and he was hurled from his throne of grandeur and of victory, to impress the world, which he mocked and despised, of the vanity of military glory and the dear-earned trophies of the battle field. No man was ever permitted by Providence to accomplish so much mischief, and yet never mortal had more admirers than he, and never were the opinions of the wise more divided in regard to the effects of his wars. A painful and sad recital may be made of the desolations he caused, so that Alaric, in comparison, would seem but a common robber, while, at the same time, a glorious eulogium might be justly made of the many benefits he conferred upon mankind. The good and the evil are ever combined in all great characters; but the evil and the good are combined in him in such vast proportions, that he seems either a monster of iniquity, or an object of endless admiration. There are some characters which the eye of the mind can survey at once, as the natural eye can take in the proportions of a small but singular edifice; but Napoleon was a genius and an actor of such wonderful greatness and majesty, both from his natural talents and the great events which he controlled, that he rises before us, when we contemplate him

Character of Napoleon.

like some vast pyramid or some majestic cathedral, which the eye can survey only in details. Our age is not sufficiently removed from the times in which he lived, we are too near the object of vision, to pronounce upon the general effect of his character, and only prejudiced or vain persons would attempt to do so. He must remain for generations simply an object of awe, of wonder, of dread, of admiration, of hatred, or of love.

Nor can we condense the events of his life any more than we can analyze his character and motives. We do not yet know their relative importance. In the progress of ages, some of them will stand out more beautiful and more remarkable, and some will be entirely lost sight of. Thousands of books will waste away as completely as if they were burned, like the Alexandrian library; and a future age may know no more of the details of Napoleon's battles than we now know of Alexander's marches. But the main facts can never be lost; something will remain, enough to "point a moral or adorn a tale." The object of all historical knowledge is moral wisdom, and this we may learn from narratives as brief as the stories of Joseph and Daniel, or the accounts which Tacitus has left us of the lives of the Roman tyrants.

Napoleon Bonaparte was born in Corsica, the 15th of August, 1769, of respectable parents, and was early sent to a royal military school at Brienne. He was not distinguished for any attainments, except in mathematics; he was studious, reserved, and cold; he also exhibited an inflexible will, the great distinguishing quality of his mind. At the age of fourteen, in view of superior attainments, he was removed to the military school at Paris, and, at the age of seventeen, received his commission as second lieutenant in a regiment of artillery.

Early Life of Napoleon.

When the Revolution broke out, Toulon, one of the arsenals of France, took a more decided part in favor of the king and the constitution than either Marseilles or Lyons, and invited the support of the English and Spanish squadrons. The Committee of Public Safety resolved to subdue the city; and Bonaparte, even at that time a brigadier-general, with the command of the artillery at the siege, recommended a course which led to the capture of that important place.

For his distinguished services and talents, he was appointed sec-

ond in command, by the National Convention, when that body was threatened and overawed by the rebellious National Guard. He saved the state and defended the constitutional authorities, for which service he was appointed second in command of the great army of the interior, and then general-in-chief in the place of Barras, who found his new office as director incompatible with the duties of a general.

Early Services to the Republic.

The other directors who now enjoyed the supreme command were Reubel, Laréveillère-Lépeaux, Le Tourneur, and Carnot. Sièyes, a man of great genius, had been elected, but had declined. Among these five men, Carnot was the only man of genius, and it was through his exertions that France, under the Committee of Public Safety, had been saved from the torrent of invasion. But Barras, though inferior to Carnot in genius, had even greater influence, and it was through his favor that Bonaparte received his appointments. That a young man of twenty-five should have the command of the army of the interior, is as remarkable as the victories which subsequently showed that his elevation was not the work of chance, but of a providential hand.

The acknowledged favorite of Barras was a young widow, by birth a Creole of the West Indies, whose husband, a general in the army of the Rhine, had been guillotined during the Reign of Terror. Her name was Josephine Beauharnois; and, as a woman of sense, of warm affections, and of rare accomplishments, she won the heart of Bonaparte, and was married to him, March 9, 1796. Her dowry was the command of the army of Italy, which, through her influence, the young general received.

Then commenced his brilliant military career. United with Josephine, whom he loved, he rose in rank and power.

Napoleon's Army.

The army which Bonaparte commanded was composed of forty-two thousand men, while the forces of the Italian states numbered one hundred and sixty thousand, and could with ease be increased to three hundred thousand. But Italian soldiers had never been able to contend with either Austrian or French, and Bonaparte felt sure of victory. His soldiers were young men, inured to danger and toil; and among his officers were Berthier, Massena, Marmont Augereau, Serrurier, Joubert, Lannes, and Murat. They were not then all generals, but they became afterwards marshals of France

Italian Campaigns.

The campaign of 1796, in Italy, was successful beyond precedent in the history of war; and the battles of Montenotte, Millesimo, and Dego, the passage of the bridge of Lodi, the siege of Mantua, and the victories at Castiglione, Caldiero, Arcola, Rivoli, and Mantua, extended the fame of Bonaparte throughout the world. The Austrian armies were every where defeated, and Italy was subjected to the rule of the French. "With the French invasion commenced tyranny under the name of liberty, rapine under the name of generosity, the stripping of churches, the robbing of hospitals, the levelling of the palaces of the great, and the destruction of the cottages of the poor; all that military license has of most terrible, all that despotic authority has of most oppressive."

While Bonaparte was subduing Italy, the French under Moreau were contending, on the Rhine, with the Austrians under the Archduke Charles. Several great battles were fought, and masterly retreats were made, but without decisive results.

State of Finances.

It is surprising that England, France, and the other contending powers, were able at this time to commence the contest, much more so to continue it for more than twenty years. The French Directory, on its accession to power, found the finances in a state of inextricable confusion. Assignats had fallen to almost nothing, and taxes were collected with such difficulty, that there were arrears to the amount of fifteen hundred millions of francs. The armies were destitute and ill paid, the artillery without horses, and the infantry depressed by suffering and defeat. In England, the government of Pitt was violently assailed for carrying on a war against a country which sought simply to revolutionize her own institutions, and which all the armies of Europe had thus far failed to subdue. Mr. Fox, and others in the opposition, urged the folly of continuing a contest which had already added one hundred millions of pounds to the national debt, and at a time when French armies were preparing to invade Italy; but Pitt argued that the French must be nearly exhausted by their great exertions, and would soon be unable to continue the warfare. The nation, generally, took this latter view of the case, and parliament voted immense supplies.

The year 1797 opened gloomily for England. The French had gained immense successes. Bonaparte had subdued Italy, Hoche had suppressed the rebellion in La Vendée, Austria was preparing

State of English Affairs.

to defend her last barriers in the passes of the Alps, Holland was virtually incorporated with Republican France, Spain had also joined its forces, and the whole continent was arrayed against Great Britain. England had interfered in a contest in which she was not concerned, and was forced to reap the penalty. The funds fell from ninety-eight to fifty-one, and petitions for a change of ministers were sent to the king from almost every city of note in the kingdom. The Bank of England stopped payment in specie, and the country was overburdened by taxation. Nevertheless, parliament voted new supplies, and made immense preparations, especially for the increase of the navy. One hundred and twenty-four ships of the line, one hundred and eighty frigates, and one hundred and eighty-four sloops, were put in commission, and sent to the various quarters of the globe.

Battle of Cape St. Vincent, Camperdown.

Soon after occurred the memorable mutiny in the English fleet, which produced the utmost alarm; but it was finally suppressed by the vigorous measures which the government adopted, and the happy union of firmness and humanity, justice and concession which Mr. Pitt exercised. The mutiny was entirely disconnected with France, and resulted from the real grievances which existed in the navy; grievances which, to the glory of Pitt, were candidly considered and promptly redressed. The temporary disgrace which resulted to the navy by this mutiny was soon, however, wiped away by the battle of Cape St. Vincent, in which Admiral Jervis, seconded by Nelson and Collingwood, with fifteen ships of the line and six frigates, defeated a Spanish fleet of twenty-seven ships of the line and twelve frigates. This important naval victory delivered England from all fears of invasion, and inspired courage into the hearts of the nation, groaning under the heavy taxes which the war increased. Before the season closed, the Dutch fleet, of fifteen ships of the line and eleven frigates, was defeated by an English one, under Admiral Duncan, consisting of sixteen ships of the line and three frigates. The battles of Camperdown and Cape St. Vincent, in which the genius of Duncan and Nelson were signally exhibited, were among the most important fought at sea during the war, and diffused unexampled joy throughout Great Britain. The victors were all rewarded. Jervis became Earl St. Vincent, Admiral Duncan became a viscount, and Commo-

dore Nelson became a baronet. Soon after the bonfires and illuminations for these victories were ended, Mr. Burke died urging, as his end approached, the ministry to persevere in the great struggle to which the nation was committed.

While the English were victorious on the water, the French obtained new triumphs on the land. In twenty days after the opening of the campaign of 1797, Bonaparte had driven the Archduke Charles, with an army equal to his own, over the Julian Alps, and occupied Carniola, Carinthia, Trieste, Fiume, and the Italian Tyrol, while a force of forty-five thousand men, flushed with victory, was on the northern declivity of the Alps, within fifty leagues of Vienna. In the midst of these successes, an insurrection broke out in the Venetian territories; and, as Bonaparte was not supported, as he expected, by the armies of the Rhine, and partly in consequence of the jealousy of the Directory, he resolved to forego all thoughts of dictating peace under the walls of Vienna, and contented himself with making as advantageous terms as possible with the Austrian government. Bonaparte accomplished his object, and directed his attention to the subjugation of Venice, no longer the "Queen of the Adriatic, throned on her hundred isles," but degenerate, weakened, and divided. Bonaparte acted, in his treaty with Austria, with great injustice to Venice, and also encouraged the insurrection of the people in her territories. And when the Venetian government attempted to suppress rebellion in its own provinces, Bonaparte affected great indignation, and soon found means to break off all negotiations. The Venetian senate made every effort to avert the storm, but in vain. Bonaparte declared war against Venice, and her fall soon after resulted. The French seized all the treasure they could find, and obliged the ruined capital to furnish heavy contributions, and surrender its choicest works of art. Soon after, the youthful conqueror established himself in the beautiful chateau of Montebello near Milan, and there dictated peace to the assembled ambassadors of Germany, Rome, Genoa, Venice, Naples, Piedmont, and the Swiss republic. The treaty of Campo Formio exhibited both the strength and the perfidy of Bonaparte, especially in reference to Venice, which was disgracefully despoiled to pay the expenses of the Italian wars. Among other things, the splendid bronze

horses, which, for six hundred years, had stood over the portico of the church of St. Mark, to commemorate the capture of Constantinople by the Venetian crusaders, and which had originally been brought from Corinth to Rome by ancient conquerors, were removed to Paris to decorate the Tuileries.

Bonaparte's journey from Italy to Paris, after Venice, with its beautiful provinces, was surrendered to Austria, was a triumphal procession. The enthusiasm of the Parisians was boundless; the public curiosity to see him indescribable. But he lived in a quiet manner, and assumed the dress of a member of the Institute, being lately elected. Great *fêtes* were given to his honor, and his victories were magnified.

But he was not content with repose or adulation. His ambitious soul panted for new conquests, and he conceived the scheme of his Egyptian invasion, veiled indeed from the eyes of the world by a pretended attack on England herself. He was invested, with great pomp, by the Directory, with the command of the army of England, but easily induced the government to sanction the invasion of Egypt. It is not probable that Bonaparte seriously contemplated the conquest of England, knowing the difficulty of supporting and recruiting his army, even if he succeeded in landing his forces. He probably designed to divert the attention of the English from his projected enterprise.

When all was ready, Bonaparte (9th May) embarked at Toulon in a fleet of thirteen ships of the line, fourteen frigates, seventy-two brigs, and four hundred transports, containing thirty-six thousand soldiers and ten thousand sailors. He was joined by reënforcements at Genoa, Ajaccio, Civita Castellana, and on the 10th of June arrived at Malta, which capitulated without firing a shot; proceeded on his voyage, succeeded in escaping the squadron of Nelson, and on the 1st of July reached Alexandria. He was vigorously opposed by the Mamelukes, who were the actual rulers of the country, but advanced in spite of them to Cairo, and marched along the banks of the Nile. Near the Pyramids, a great battle took place, and the Mamelukes were signally defeated, and the fate of Egypt was sealed.

But Nelson got intelligence of Bonaparte's movements, and resolved to "gain a peerage, or a grave in Westminster Abbey."

Then succeeded the battle of the Nile, and the victory of Nelson, one of the most brilliant but bloody actions in the history of naval warfare. Nelson was wounded, but gained a peerage and magnificent presents. The battle was a mortal stroke to the French army, and made the conquest of Egypt useless. Bonaparte found his army exiled, and himself destined to hopeless struggles with Oriental powers. But he made gigantic efforts, in order to secure the means of support, to prosecute scientific researches, and to complete the conquest of the country. He crossed the desert which separates Africa from Asia, with his army, which did not exceed sixteen thousand men, invaded Syria, stormed Jaffa, massacred its garrison, since he could not afford to support the prisoners, — a most barbarous measure, and not to be excused even in view of the policy of the act, — and then advanced to Acre. Its memorable siege in the time of the Crusades should have deterred Bonaparte from the attempt to subdue it with his little army in the midst of a hostile population. But he made the attack. The fortress, succored by Sir Sidney Smith, successfully resisted the impetuosity of his troops, and they were compelled to retire with the loss of three thousand men. His discomfited army retreated to Egypt, and suffered all the accumulated miseries which fatigue, heat, thirst, plague, and famine could inflict. He, however, amidst all these calamities, added to discontents among the troops, won the great battle of Aboukir, and immediately after, leaving the army under the command of Kleber, returned to Alexandria, and secretly set sail for France, accompanied by Berthier, Lannes, Murat, Marmont, and other generals. He succeeded in escaping the English cruisers, and, on the 8th of October, 1799, landed in France.

Siege of Acre.

Bonaparte, had he not been arrested at Acre by Sir Sidney Smith, probably would have conquered Asia Minor, and established an Oriental empire; but such a conquest would not have been permanent. More brilliant victories were in reserve for him than conquering troops of half-civilized Turks and Arabs.

During the absence of Bonaparte in Egypt, the French Directory became unpopular, and the national finances more embarrassed than ever. But Switzerland was invaded and conquered: an outrage which showed the ambitious designs of the government

more than any previous attack which it had made on the liberties of Europe. The Papal States were next seized, the venerable pontiff was subjected to cruel indignities, and the treasures and monuments of Rome were again despoiled. "The Vatican was stripped to its naked walls, and the immortal frescoes of Raphael and Michael Angelo alone remained in solitary beauty amidst the general desolation." The King of Sardinia was driven from his dominions, and Naples yielded to the tricolored flag. Immense military contributions were levied in all these unfortunate states, and all that was beautiful in art was transported to Paris.

In the mean time, the spirits of the English were revived by the victories of Nelson, and greater preparations than ever were made to resist the general, who now plainly aimed at the conquest of Europe. England, Austria, and Russia combined against France and her armies met with reverses in Italy and on the Rhine. Suwarrow, with a large army of Russians united with Austrians, gained considerable success, and General Moreau was obliged to retreat before him. Serrurier surrendered with seven thousand men, and Suwarrow entered Milan in triumph, with sixty thousand troops. Turin shared the fate of Milan, and Piedmont and Lombardy were overrun by the allies. The republicans were expelled from Naples. Mantua fell, and Suwarrow marched with his conquering legions into Switzerland.

Reverses of the French.

These disasters happened while Bonaparte was in Egypt; and his return to France was hailed with universal joy. His victories in Egypt had prepared the way for a most enthusiastic reception, and for his assumption of the sovereign power. All the generals then in Paris paid their court to him, and his saloon, in his humble dwelling in the Rue Chantereine, resembled the court of a monarch. Lannes, Murat, Berthier, Jourdan, Augereau, Macdonald, Bournonville, Leclerc, Lefebvre, and Marmont, afterwards so illustrious as the marshals of the emperor, offered him the military dictatorship, while Sièyes, Talleyrand, and Régnier, the great civil leaders, concurred to place him at the head of affairs. He himself withdrew from the gaze of the people, affected great simplicity, and associated chiefly with men distinguished for literary and scientific attainments. But he secretly intrigued with Sièyes and with his generals. Three of the Directory sent in