

NAPOLEON, A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

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Napoleon, a short biography by R. M. Johnston

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R. M. JOHNSTON

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SHORT BIOGRAPHY**

NAPOLEON



I.



II.

NAPOLEONIC MEDALS

THE above are enlarged reproductions of originals in the author's possession; the actual diameter is 13 mil. These small medals were generally struck in gold, silver, and bronze, and were used for throwing broadcast among the people or soldiers.

I. — Struck during the Consulate, in 1803, just before the rupture of the peace with England. The legend, *Armé pour la paix*, *armed for peace*, is suggestive.

II. — The last medal bearing the effigy of Napoleon struck under the Empire; to commemorate the *Champ de Mai*, eighteen days before Waterloo.

Napoleon.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

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P R E F A C E

THIS book is intended to present to the reader in the most concise form possible, but yet with historical accuracy, an outline of the history of Napoleon that will convey an adequate first impression of his genius and policy. Without some knowledge of this extraordinary man and of his period it is impossible to understand the politics, constitution, and general circumstances of modern Europe. But the literature of the Napoleonic period is so vast, probably approaching forty thousand books, that the reader who feels disposed to get some acquaintance with it is frequently unable to find a practicable way through the maze. It may be said without disparagement to their writers that any one of the three or four best general histories of Napoleon, taken alone, is inadequate to convey a sufficient impression of the man and his times. But to Napoleonic literature as a whole there is no key; a complete bibliography is so vast an undertaking that even the labours of Baron Lumbroso and Herr

Kircheisen appear to offer little promise of completion. The latter's select bibliography is the best available guide; but, however valuable for the student, some two hundred pages of bare bibliographical entries cannot be of great service to those not possessing some previously acquired knowledge. It is part of the purpose of the present work to enable the ordinary reader or the would-be student safely to take a few first steps in Napoleonic literature, avoiding the innumerable books of little or no authority, and getting some sort of notion beforehand of what those here recommended are likely to give him.¹

As to the narrative itself the desire to attain conciseness combined with true proportion presents difficulties and disadvantages, results in unavoidable gaps. Thus no attempt can be made to narrate the numerous military operations of Napoleon on the same scale. Certain campaigns and battles, — Wagram, Austerlitz, Waterloo, for instance, — have been treated more fully as being of special importance politically or strategically; others have been passed over with a bare mention, though not without due consideration for the clearness

¹ As to the selection of books see also the remarks in the note to Chapter I.

and continuity of the narrative. Where details and anecdotes have been brought in it has invariably been for the purpose of illustrating broad issues.

To furnish a correct outline of Napoleonic history and to point the way along which it may be profitably pursued, that, and nothing more, is what this book aims at effecting.

This new edition is revised to date in the bibliographies, and is corrected in a few typographical and other slips. Its appearance coincides with that of my *French Revolution*, of which it forms the continuation. Will the reader kindly note, however, that this is not a short history, as that is, but a short biography? The one book continues the other, but in a different key.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., April, 1909.