

Gray was straining his eyes to read the message of the roadstead and the shore, and long before he had put the ship to an anchor the patched-up boat was swung out ready for his service.

‘Don’t fancy the look of things a bit,

Blackwood’s Magazine

Mac!’ he gloomily declared. ‘Not a ship in the bay. Which means that if those devils have been here, they’ve had matters all their own way. And then there’s the island — did you ever set eyes on such a dead-looking spot?’

(To be concluded)

A ROMANCE OF NAPOLEON*

EXCEPT for a strange propaganda book, which served to interpret German militarism to us at a moment when the public mind was almost a blank with stupefied amazement as to what such a phenomenon could possibly mean in the year of grace 1914, Cramb — known to a very small circle as an eloquent lecturer at Queen Margaret College, an occasional orator at the Staff College, and an enthusiast of Lord Roberts and national service — was an obscure and virtually unknown author. The timeliness of his study on *Germany and England* gave that work a celebrity it could in no other way have attained, so that the present book — which emerges, as it were, from his tomb — represents the climax of the author’s achievement.

To throw a searchlight upon the mind of Napoleon during a few typical days of his career is a feat of considerable temerity. The masters of fiction, from Scott downwards, have evaded the task; Cramb competes more nearly with the historians. If he succeeds in giving us a closer image of the cerebration of Napoleon than anybody else, it is by the effective use of the historic method. The work may fail completely to cohere as a work of fiction; but if

Napoleon’s long soliloquy in the middle of the book succeeds in convincing us of its sincerity and truth — and this we are inclined to think (*tour de force* though it is) that it does better than any mental picture by Foy, Masson, Vandal, Fournier, Lenz, Lanfrey, or even Taine — then we are bound to admit that *Schönbrunn*, with all its faults, has considerable claims upon our attention. It is plain that the author has made a close study of Napoleon’s letters and conversations. Few writers, if any, have given us a better idea of the external sensation produced by the Emperor than Charles Lever. Cramb hardly attempts this, but he gives us the reflective mind of the Emperor at work during three days in October, 1809, when Napoleon was at the zenith of his power. The foils of the Emperor’s mentality are supplied by studied yet lifelike representations of Berthier, Rapp, Duroc, and Savary — and last, perhaps, with a visage unnaturally *patibulaire*. The still searing influence of the memory of Lannes affords one or two master touches to the recital. Besides representing a life study, the book probably communicates the writer’s considered judgment as to the turning-point in Napoleon’s career. Some would put it considerably earlier; but there is little doubt that by

* *Schönbrunn: A Romance of Napoleon* (published in America as *The Rule of Might*). By J. A. Cramb. (Putnam. 6s. net.)

this time Napoleon had got himself into a position in which, as in an end game at chess, every move was forced. The central incident of the three days' tale is thus narrated by the historians:

On the night of October 15, Napoleon left Schönbrunn, his departure having been hastened by an untoward incident. Three days previously, when reviewing the troops at Schönbrunn, a young man had tried to force his way into the Emperor's presence, and on being arrested was found to be armed with a long knife, with which he unhesitatingly declared he meant to murder the Emperor. This youth — Frederick Staps by name — still little more than a boy, was the son of a Protestant clergyman at Naumberg, and of a gentle and tranquil disposition, but the sufferings of his native land had filled him with such unutterable hatred of its oppressor that he had determined to seek his life. Napoleon at first thought the youth was mad, and was only reluctantly convinced by Staps himself of the deep-rooted animosity against him in Germany, and of the extent to which the country was already arming. When he asked Staps, 'Would you be grateful to me if I pardoned you?' he calmly replied, 'I would try again to kill you.' He was then shot in the greatest secrecy. The incident was hushed up, but if it happened to leak out, the police were to see to it that the would-be assassin was described as a madman.

Napoleon, as the story ends, returns in triumph to Paris, not without gloomy premonitions, but all unconscious of the fact that, within five years and less, the cause for which Staps died heroically would be triumphant. He had roused a spirit of nationalism against him, while he had dissociated himself from the local patriotism of France. In France could be detected the first symptoms of secret aversion for a ruler for whom France was no longer sufficient, a victor whose conquests were bought with French blood, but won in the interests — not of

France — but of world dominion. Seeley's theory is adopted (and it is, indeed, almost inevitable) that he, and not the French people, was kindled to a frenzy in his hatred of England, he, the revolution *bottée*, had become an aristocrat and was becoming a dynast, talking peace while incarnating discord.

Thus Cramb, with inspiration drawn from Tolstoy (*War and Peace*) and Las Cases, escalades one of the great romantic themes of history, 'that invisible axis upon which time revolves,' not with fixed ideas, but in the rôle of an artist originating ideas. The 'element of work' in which Napoleon lived he has shared, and the resultant emerges towards life like one of Rodin's statues; Napoleon the disillusioned, the man of tragic destiny, the antagonist of the nations. In the background is a large canvas of Vienna, the Rahab among cities, masquerading while Austria was being vivisected, mocking its enemies while its bastions were blown to atoms at the whim of Napoleon, and abject under the insult, provoking the fine repartee, 'One cannot make concessions to the abject without derogating from the reverence we owe to the brave.' The fable of the fiction is not perhaps wholly apt or entirely congruous; the love affair, spluttering indeed with passion, yet hardly convincing in verisimilitude, fitting complement of a *succès d'estime*. One cherishes vignettes; the noon parade, Napoleon's ride, the assassin, Napoleon's dream, the address to the guard, Duroc listening to the Emperor's soliloquy, poet von Renzdorf and composer Beethoven, an impressive dialogue. Cramb was an admirer of Germans and he captivates our sympathy for the youthful Staps, who dies with a patriot's cry on his lips — 'Liberty, Germany!'

The Times

HOMeward BOUND

SAVOR of blown sea spray
On lips that dry to the wind,
Thoughts of the dockyards, thoughts of pay,
And of comrades left behind;
To the measure of bows that drive and dip,
Shiver and rise from each roaring crest,
We count the hours as the gallant ship
Speeds from the twilight West.

*And it's ho! for the Longships, the Lizard and the Eddystone —
Hear the big screws thudding out their miles of milky foam?
See the Old Man on the bridge, watching for the Manacles,
Edging her nor'east a bit, full-speed for home?*

Calmed by the land's embrace
The sea but sobs in sleep;
Here, with a sombre, spectral grace
Dusk hillsides flank the deep;
Slowly our white track dims and fades,
Slower the gray hull shears the tide,
Till like a ghost in a world of shades
To the harbor of home we glide.

*Sing ho! we've passed the Longships, the Lizard and the Eddystone —
See the darker sky and smoke over Plymouth Town?
Tell them we've arrived; blow a blast and rouse them up a bit;
Hear the echoes answer? Hear the engines slacking down?*

Now the tide laps and slips
Past our high bows, and soon,
Threading a maze of ships,
We follow the path of the moon;
Happy each soul on board to-night
As the deep gongs ring their welcome call,
And from aloft, by the binnacle-light,
The quiet orders fall.

*Now the tender's spotted us sliding in through Cawsand Bay,
Heard us calling, seen our signal, watched us creeping past;
See the Batten eye a-gleaming, sending friendly winks at us?
Hear the cable running out? Home again at last!*

Punch