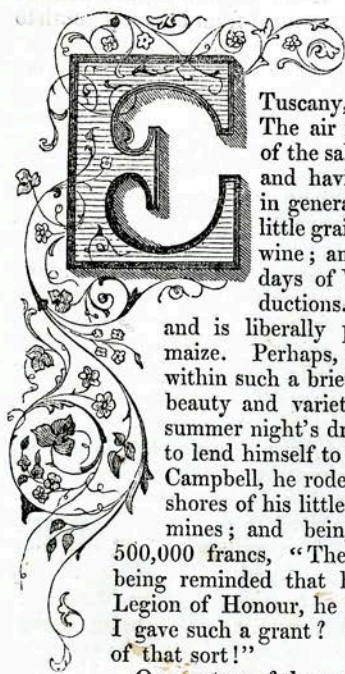


XXVII.—NAPOLEON'S MODE OF LIFE AND OCCUPATION

IN ELBA.



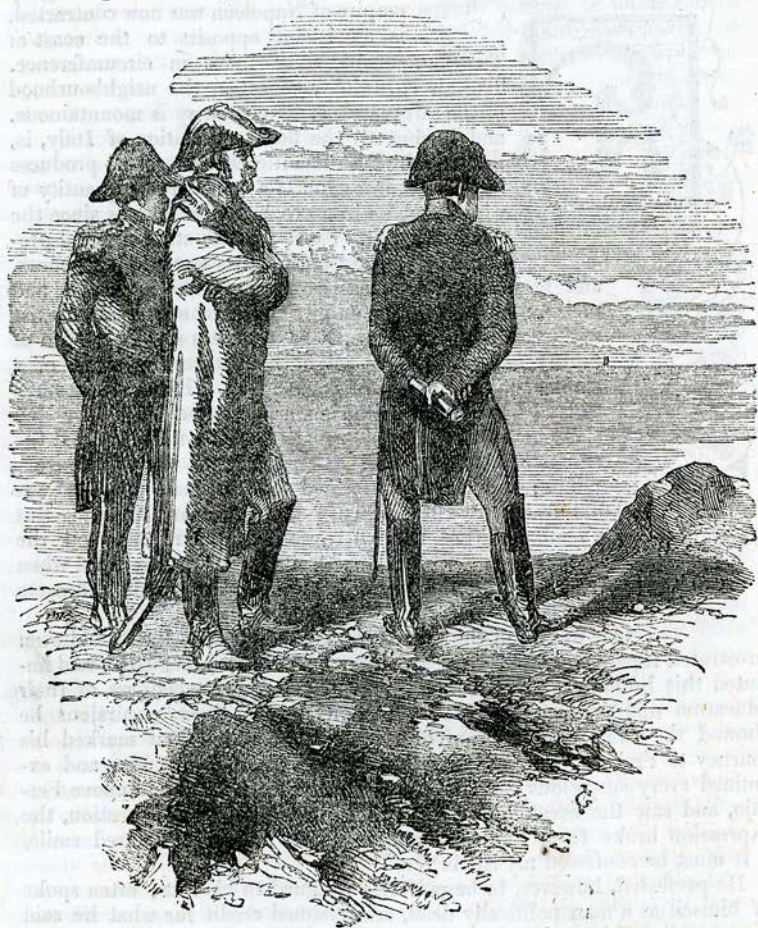
ELBA, to the limits of which the mighty empire of Napoleon was now contracted, is an island opposite to the coast of Tuscany, about sixty miles in circumference. The air is healthy, except in the neighbourhood of the salt-marshes. The country is mountainous, and having all the florid vegetation of Italy, is, in general, of a romantic character. It produces little grain, but exports a considerable quantity of wine; and its iron ore has been famous since the days of Virgil. There are also other mineral productions. The island boasts two good harbours, and is liberally productive of vines, olives, fruits, and maize. Perhaps, if an empire could be supposed to exist within such a brief space, Elba possesses so much, both of beauty and variety, as might constitute the scene of a summer night's dream of sovereignty. Bonaparte seemed to lend himself to the illusion, as, accompanied by Sir Neil Campbell, he rode in his usual exploring mood around the shores of his little state. He did not fail to visit the iron-mines; and being informed that the annual produce was 500,000 francs, "These, then," he said, "are mine." But being reminded that he had conferred that revenue on the Legion of Honour, he exclaimed, "Where was my head when I gave such a grant? But I have made many foolish decrees of that sort!"

One or two of the poorer class of inhabitants knelt, and even prostrated themselves when they met him. He seemed disgusted, and imputed this humiliating degree of abasement to the wretchedness of their education under the auspices of the monks. On these excursions he showed the same apprehension of assassination which had marked his journey to Frejus. Two couriers, well armed, rode before him and examined every suspicious spot. But, as he climbed a mountain above Ferrajo, and saw the ocean approach its feet in almost every direction, the expression broke from him, accompanied with a good-humoured smile, "It must be confessed my isle is very little."

He professed, however, to be perfectly resigned to his fate; often spoke of himself as a man politically dead, and claimed credit for what he said upon public affairs as having no remaining interest in them. He professed his intentions were to devote himself exclusively to science and literature; at other times, he said he would live in his little island like a justice of peace in a county.

But the character of Bonaparte was singularly opposed to a state of seclusion. His propensities continued to be exactly of the same description at Elba which had so long terrified and disquieted Europe. To change the external face of what was around him—to imagine extensive alterations without accurately considering the means by which they were to be accom-

plished—to work within his petty province such alterations as his limits permitted—to resume, in short, upon a small scale, those changes which he had attempted upon that which was most magnificent—to apply to Elba the system of policy which he had exercised so long in Europe, was the only mode in which he seems to have found amusement and exercise for the impatient energies of a temper, accustomed from his early youth to



NAPOLEON AT ELBA.

work upon others, but apt to become lethargic, sullen, and discontented, when it was compelled, for want of other exercise, to recoil upon itself.

During the first two or three weeks of his residence in the island of Elba, Napoleon had already planned improvements, or alterations and innovations at least, which, had they been carried into execution with the means which he possessed, would have perhaps taken his lifetime to execute. It

was no wonder, indeed, accustomed as he had been to speak the word and to be obeyed, and to consider the improvements which he meditated as those which became the head of a great empire, that he should not have been able to recollect that his present operations respected a petty islet, where magnificence was to be limited, not only by utility, but by the want of funds.

In the course of two or three days' travelling, with the same rapidity which characterised his movements in his frequent progresses through France, and showing the same impatience of rest or delay, Napoleon had visited every spot in his little island, mines, woods, salt-marshes, harbours, fortifications, and whatever was worthy of an instant's consideration, and had meditated improvements and innovations respecting every one of them. Till he had done this he was impatient of rest, and having done so he lacked occupation.

One of his first, and, perhaps, most characteristic proposals, was to aggrandize and extend his Lilliputian dominions by the occupation of an uninhabited island, called Rianosa, which had been left desolate on account of the frequent descents of the corsairs. He sent thirty of his guards, with ten of the independent company belonging to the island, upon this expedition (what a contrast to those which he had formerly directed!), sketched out a plan of a fortification, and remarked with complacency, "Europe will say that I have already made a conquest."

In an incredibly short time Napoleon had also planned several roads—had contrived means to convey water from the mountains to Porto Ferrajo—designed two palaces, one for the country, the other in the city—a separate mansion for his sister Pauline—stables for one hundred and fifty horses—a lazaretto—buildings for the accommodation of the tunny fishery—and salt-works on a new construction at Porto Longone. The Emperor of Elba proposed also purchasing various domains, and had the price estimated, for the inclination of the proprietor was not reckoned essential to the transaction. He ended by establishing four places of residence in the different quarters of the island; and as his amusement consisted in constant change and alteration, he travelled from one to another with the restlessness of a bird in a cage, which springs from perch to perch, since it is prevented from winging the air, its natural element. It seemed as if the magnitude of the object was not so much the subject of his consideration, provided it afforded immediate scope for employing his constant and stimulated desire of activity. He was like the thorough-bred gamester, who, deprived of the means of depositing large stakes, will rather play at small game than leave the table.

Napoleon placed his court also upon an ambitious scale, having more reference to what he had so long been, than to what he had actually been reduced to; while, at the same time, the furniture and internal accommodation of the Imperial palace were meaner by far than those of an English gentleman of ordinary rank. The interior of his household, though reduced to thirty-five persons, still held the titles, and affected the rank proper to an imperial court, of which the petty sovereign made a political use. He displayed a national flag, having a red bend dexter in a white field, the bend bearing three bees. To dignify his capital, having discovered that the ancient name of Porto Ferrajo was Comopoli (i. e. the city of Como), he commanded it to be called Cosmopoli, or the city of all nations.

His body-guard, of about seven hundred infantry and eighty cavalry, seemed to occupy as much of Napoleon's attention as the grand army did formerly. They were constantly exercised, especially in throwing shot and shells; and in a short time he was observed to be anxious about obtaining recruits for them. This was no difficult matter where all the world had so lately been in arms, and engaged in a profession which many, doubtless, for whom a peaceful life had few charms, laid aside with regret and longed to resume.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

XXVIII.—SCENES IN THE ARCTIC REGIONS.

SEPTEMBER 12.—To those who have not seen a northern ocean in winter—who have not seen it, I should say, in a winter's storm—the term “ice,” exciting but the recollection of what they only know at rest, in an inland lake or canal, conveys no idea of what it is the fate of an arctic navigator to witness and to feel. But let them remember that ice is stone—a floating rock in the stream, a promontory or an island when aground, not less solid than if it were a land of granite. Then let them imagine, if they can, these mountains of crystal hurled through a narrow strait by a rapid tide, meeting, as mountains in motion would meet, with the noise of thunder, breaking from each other's precipices huge fragments, or rending each other asunder, till, losing their former equilibrium, they fall over headlong, lifting the sea around in breakers, and whirling it in eddies; while the flatter fields of ice, forced against these masses, or against the rocks, by the wind and the stream, rise out in the sea till they fall back on themselves, adding to the indescribable commotion and noise which attend these occurrences.

It is not a little, too, to know and to feel our utter helplessness in these cases. There is not a moment in which it can be conjectured what will happen in the next: there is not one which may not be the last; and yet that next moment may bring rescue and safety. It is a strange, as it is an anxious position; and, if fearful, often giving not time for fear, so unexpected is every event, and so quick the transitions. If the noise, and the motion, and the hurry in every thing around, are distracting,—if the attention is troubled to fix on any thing amid such confusion,—still must it be alive, that it may seize on the single moment of help or escape which may occur. Yet with all this, and it is the hardest task of all, there is nothing to be acted, no effort to be made: and though the very sight of the movement around inclines the seaman to be himself busy, while we can scarcely repress the instinct that directs us to help ourselves in cases of danger, he must be patient, as if he were unconcerned or careless; waiting as he best can for the fate, be it what it may, which he cannot influence or avoid.

But I must not here forget the debts we owed to our ship on this and other occasions before and afterwards. Her light draught of water was of the greatest advantage, and still more the admirable manner in which she had been strengthened. It is plain that either of the ships employed on the former expeditions must have been here lost, from their mere draught of water, since they would have struck on the rocks over which we were hurried by the ice; while, however fortified, they would have been crushed like a nutshell, in consequence of their shape.

September 15.—The sky had worn a very settled aspect on the preceding evening; and the wind, rising, increased to a storm during the night. Also