

Napoleon Bonaparte



NAPOLEON'S ADDRESSES

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**Selections From the Proclamations, Speeches and
Correspondence of Napoleon Bonaparte**

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Contact: info@e-artnow.org

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INTRODUCTION.

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The flash of Napoleon Bonaparte's sword so blinded men in his lifetime, and, indeed, long after, that they were unable to distinguish a second weapon in his hand.

The clearer vision which time and study bring have shown that he used words almost as effectively as the sword, and that throughout his career the address ably supported the military manœuvre.

The first complete demonstration of the elaborate use made by Napoleon of the address was the publication of the gigantic work known as the "*Correspondance de Napoleon.*" Though the thirty-two ponderous volumes which form this *magnus opus* appeared nearly forty years ago, it is little known to general readers, its size and cost confining it to special libraries, and its documentary character repelling all but special students.

Yet it is only in these volumes that Napoleon's official life can be traced in detail from Toulon to St. Helena. Every document which he wrote relating to public affairs is—if we may believe the editors—printed in the collection. The number is enormous. When the commission appointed to collect the material began its labors, it found itself obliged to go through *ten thousand* volumes pertaining to Napoleon's life. The archives of Paris yielded forty thousand different documents of which he was the author, and the rulers of Austria, Bavaria, Hesse, Russia, Sardinia, and Wurtemberg sent contributions from their royal records.

Across the pages of the great tomes file the mighty procession of soldiers and generals, priests and cardinals, kings and peoples who, in the twenty years in which Napoleon was the preëminent figure of Europe, fell captive to his charms or his power. Here are the words by which he fired starving armies to battle, bullied obstinate powers to follow his plans, put hope into despot-ridden people, told kings their duties.

In these addresses one traces Napoleon's daily thought, so far as he cared to reveal it to others, watches the development of his plans and follows the gradual enlargement of his power. Nowhere else is there so fine an opportunity to observe the steady unfolding of his ambition for world-mastery, to see how he aspired to rule France, then her neighbors, then Europe, the Orient, America, the Isles of the sea. An especially curious study in connection with that of the evolution of his ambition is that of the methods he followed to enlist men in his stupendous undertakings. Such a study is possible only in the addresses.

The spell he exercised over the army is explained here, partially, at least. It was the custom to post the addresses through-out the ranks where each soldier could see and read them. The men had been accustomed at home to seeing all official communications from the Government to the people placed on the bill-boards, and so read them from habit. But Napoleon's bulletins, if they were posted in a familiar way, had a new character. He addressed the soldiers as if they were comrades, explaining the general