

**LOUIS ANTOINE FAUVELET DE
BOURRIENNE**



**REMEMBERING
NAPOLEON**

VOL.1-4

Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne

Remembering Napoleon (Vol.1-4)

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Aria Baxter

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Historical Context](#)

[Remembering Napoleon \(Vol.1-4\)](#)

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

Introduction

[Table of Contents](#)

At the fault line where private memory contests public myth, *Remembering Napoleon* (Vol.1-4) follows a secretary's steady gaze upon a commander's meteoric ascent, inviting readers to weigh the tension between intimate familiarity and the spectacle of power, between the routines of paperwork and the shock of history in motion, and between admiration that fuels service and scrutiny that refuses to flatter, so that each scene of policy, travel, and conversation becomes an inquiry into how an individual's decisions radiate outward to shape institutions, empires, and lives while leaving, in their wake, the interpretive puzzles that only hindsight can partially resolve.

This work is a multi-volume memoir by Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, a schoolmate of Napoleon and later his private secretary during the period known as the Consulate. First published in the late 1820s, it belongs to the tradition of eyewitness life-writing that emerged in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Its setting stretches from Paris to broader European theaters shaped by diplomatic and military change, yet its vantage point remains distinctly administrative and domestic, attuned to offices, itineraries, and working rooms rather than only to battlefields, thereby situating statecraft within the rhythms of daily labor and personal proximity.

The premise is straightforward and compelling: a close aide records how governance, ambition, and personality

entwine when a figure of extraordinary energy reorganizes a nation. The reading experience mixes careful observation with anecdote, proceeding in a generally chronological manner while pausing for portraits, judgments, and recollections that illuminate character as much as event. The voice is personal without becoming confessional, measured yet attentive to the texture of conversation and decision-making. The tone balances respect with reserve, creating a narrative that feels both immediate and reflective, and that invites readers to inhabit corridors of power without foreclosing their own interpretations.

As historical memoir, the work foregrounds the architecture of authority: orders drafted, messages relayed, audiences arranged, and tensions managed between ideals inherited from revolution and the consolidating mechanisms of rule. It watches how charisma intersects with institutions, how speed and decisiveness demand systems able to keep pace, and how proximity to leadership reveals the messy, iterative nature of policy. The book's sustained attention to organization, logistics, and the administrative mind clarifies how large-scale change relies not only on inspiration but also on clerks, timetables, and procedures—on the apparatus through which vision becomes practice.

Equally central is the theme of memory itself. Bourrienne writes as a participant who must also become historian, acknowledging that recollection is shaped by vantage point, distance, and the pressure to explain. The memoir draws strength from details that only a confidant could notice while reminding us that any first-person account carries limits. Readers are prompted to read actively, contrasting

personal testimony with the broader record and recognizing how selection, emphasis, and silence form part of historical truth. In doing so, the book becomes both a source and a meditation on how sources are made.

For contemporary readers, these volumes model a disciplined scrutiny of power that feels urgently relevant. They show how leadership crafts narratives, how organizations translate will into action, and how ethical dilemmas arise when loyalty meets judgment. In an age saturated with personal branding and contested information, the memoir's interplay of proximity and skepticism offers tools for understanding public life: how to distinguish momentum from myth, and how to remain attentive to the operational realities behind grand announcements. It encourages critical engagement without cynicism, illuminating the responsibilities of witnessing from the inside.

Remembering Napoleon (Vol.1-4) endures because it humanizes a transformative era while refusing to surrender complexity. It offers neither hagiography nor denunciation, but a studied account of work, temperament, and circumstance that invites careful reading and rereading. Approached as literature of witness, it rewards attention to cadence, understatement, and choice of detail; approached as history, it contributes a vital viewpoint to a much-debated period. Above all, it asks us to consider how memory can serve the public—when it clarifies, when it complicates, and when it cautions—so that past decisions might illuminate present questions.

Synopsis

[Table of Contents](#)

Remembering Napoleon (Vol.1-4), by Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, presents a sustained memoir by Napoleon Bonaparte's longtime associate and private secretary. Setting out to record habits of mind as well as public events, Bourrienne frames his account as a corrective to rumor and legend, relying on correspondence and proximity to decision-making. The opening establishes shared schooling at Brienne and first impressions of Napoleon's reserve, persistence, and appetite for work. From these origins the narrative moves toward the Revolutionary upheaval that enabled rapid advancement, preparing readers for a study of character under pressure and the practical machinery of command.

He recounts reunion with Bonaparte during the Italian command, when administrative rigor and relentless correspondence became instruments of strategy. The pages emphasize negotiations no less than battles, showing how letters, intelligence, and financial measures shaped outcomes and fed relations with the Directory. Bourrienne observes the construction of reputation through bulletins and calculated appearances, contrasting public triumph with the strain of constant drafting and bargaining. Domestic scenes, including interactions with Josephine and trusted aides, illuminate a leadership style that prized speed, secrecy, and precision. The campaign's settlement with

enemy powers introduces recurring themes of diplomacy, legitimacy, and the uses of victory.

The narrative then attends to the Egyptian expedition, setting out its mixture of military ambition, administrative experiments, and the scientific contingent that accompanied it. Bourrienne stresses the management of civil order, the orchestration of information, and the psychological demands placed on commanders amid setbacks. He traces the tightening circle of politics in France, where the Directory weakened and opportunity beckoned. The return to Paris is depicted through the lens of preparation, alliances, and paperwork that paved the way for change. Throughout, the memoir keeps focus on routine processes—drafts, audiences, and memoranda—that reveal how sweeping decisions were assembled from daily labors.

At the center lies the coup of 18 Brumaire and the establishment of the Consulate, where Bourrienne's vantage within the cabinet gives texture to procedure and pacing. He outlines the roles of ministers, police, and legislators, and follows the consolidation of authority through financial reorganization, administrative centralization, and outreach to the Church. Diplomatic exchanges and the search for a general peace figure prominently, alongside the careful shaping of decrees and public messaging. The portrait of work is unromantic: late hours, dictated notes, and relentless control of files. Rivalries among leading figures reveal the fragile equilibrium beneath apparent unity.

As the Consulate matured and institutions hardened, the memoir records both achievements and the mounting costs of concentration. Measures to honor service, reconcile

factions, and codify law sit beside expanding surveillance and ceremonial. Bourrienne's own position becomes precarious amid accusations and distrust, illustrating the system's intolerance for perceived independence. From partial remove, he reflects on the transition from provisional arrangements to durable supremacy, assessing how plebiscitary sanction, religious settlement, and military prestige intertwined. The narrative avoids sensationalism, preferring dossiers and scenes that show process: the drafting table where policy took shape, and the antechambers where access determined influence.

Later volumes follow imperial governance beyond his immediate service, drawing on documents and subsequent appointments that took him to northern Europe during the Continental System. There, he depicts the friction between commercial realities and decrees designed to isolate Britain, noting fiscal pressures, smuggling, and the strain on allied and annexed territories. Administrative burdens multiply as war expands, and the memoir traces how local officials mediated edicts with pragmatism or evasion. Through this civil lens, campaigns appear as shocks that reorder priorities at home: conscriptions, requisitions, and shifting loyalties that foreshadow eventual exhaustion across the Empire's administrative network.

The closing chapters survey the decline, Restoration, and brief resurgence, balancing personal recollection with materials gathered from colleagues and public records. Bourrienne neither absolves nor condemns wholesale; he seeks to separate theater from routine, and impulse from system. The persistent questions concern the price of

stability, the limits of centralized control, and the endurance of a leader's image beyond circumstances. Without dwelling on final reversals, the memoir ends by foregrounding the techniques of governance that outlived their author. Its broader significance lies in the intimate view of power's workshop, a resource for understanding ambition, statecraft, and the craft of remembrance.

Historical Context

[Table of Contents](#)

Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne (1769–1834) was a French diplomat and memoirist who had known Napoleon Bonaparte since their school days at the Royal Military School of Brienne-le-Château. In 1797 he became Bonaparte's private secretary, serving during the late Directory and the early Consulate. His multi-volume memoirs, later translated as *Remembering Napoleon*, were first published in Paris beginning in 1829, when European interest in Napoleonic reminiscences was intense. Written after the fall of the Empire and amid Bourbon Restoration debates over legitimacy, the work claims insider testimony on the transformation of revolutionary France into a centralized regime led by a military statesman.

The narrative opens against the upheavals of the French Revolution, when the monarchy's abolition and the wars of the First Coalition propelled ambitious officers to prominence. After the Thermidorian Reaction, the Directory governed from 1795 through two legislative councils, seeking stability amid inflation, religious conflict, and border wars. Napoleon's Italian campaign of 1796–1797, culminating in the Treaty of Campo Formio, gave him diplomatic leverage and administrative burdens that required a trusted secretariat. Bourrienne's appointment in 1797 placed him at desks in Milan and Paris where correspondence, treaties, and intelligence flowed, framing

his perspective on how military victories fed political authority.

In 1798 the Directory authorized an expedition to Egypt, intended to undermine British influence and open new commercial routes while projecting French power in the eastern Mediterranean. The army was accompanied by the Commission des Sciences et des Arts, whose inquiries produced the Institut d'Égypte and, later, the monumental Description de l'Égypte. Admiral Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile curtailed French sea control, isolating the army and shaping harsh logistical realities that Bourrienne observed at close quarters. The campaign's blend of conquest, administration, and scholarship informed his portrayal of Napoleon's methods, from proclamations to local governance under foreign occupation.

Upon returning to France, Bonaparte overthrew the Directory in the coup of 18 Brumaire (9 November 1799), inaugurating the Consulate under the Constitution of Year VIII. The new regime centralized authority in the First Consul, supported by the Council of State, prefects, and a reorganized judiciary. Financial stabilization followed, including creation of the Bank of France in 1800 and tighter tax collection. Bourrienne, still serving as private secretary, witnessed the consolidation of power through paperwork, patronage, and relentless pace. Dismissed in 1802 amid allegations about his financial conduct, he nonetheless retained a vantage point on how administrative reforms and political choreography intertwined.

Peace with Britain under the Treaty of Amiens (1802) proved brief; war resumed in 1803, and Bonaparte became

Emperor in 1804. Although Bourrienne no longer sat at the First Consul's desk, he remained within the state apparatus, later representing France at Hamburg during enforcement of the Continental System. Napoleon's Berlin Decree of 1806 and subsequent measures sought to exclude British goods from Europe, entangling neutral merchants, consuls, and municipal elites in a vast customs war. Bourrienne's experience in the Hanseatic world supplied material on economic coercion, policing of trade, and the strains such policies imposed on allies and occupied communities.

Napoleon's later wars, culminating in catastrophe in Russia in 1812 and defeats in 1813–1814, ended with his abdication and exile, while the Bourbon monarchy was restored under Louis XVIII. Bourrienne, who had distanced himself from the imperial inner circle, aligned with the Restoration and held administrative posts. Napoleon's brief return during the Hundred Days in 1815 reignited divisions across France that would continue as a contest of memories. The political transitions of 1814–1815, including amnesties, purges, and debates over continuity of laws like the Civil Code, gave Bourrienne vantage on how competing regimes managed legitimacy, public order, and reputations.

Published in 1829, Bourrienne's memoirs entered a crowded marketplace of Napoleonic texts that included Emmanuel de Las Cases's immensely influential *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*. Readers, publishers, and politicians disputed the Emperor's legacy, and Bourrienne's volumes, edited and supplemented from documents and recollections, were rapidly translated and reprinted. Admirers of Napoleon, including former generals and

courtiers, issued rebuttals accusing him of errors or bias, while others praised his documentary detail. The work thus stands within Restoration-era battles over history and legitimacy, where the press, salons, and courts of law all shaped a public narrative about revolutionary change, empire, and national identity.

Remembering Napoleon reflects an age when war, administration, and communication determined political fortunes. From his vantage in chanceries, councils, and consulates, Bourrienne foregrounds paperwork—orders, bulletins, decrees—as instruments of power, and shows how meritocratic rhetoric coexisted with patronage and surveillance. His narrative charts the passage from revolutionary improvisation to codified centralization, while registering Europe's resistance through blockade, coalition, and diplomacy. By emphasizing character, decision-making, and the theater of governance, the work both records and critiques its era: it nourishes the Napoleonic legend with vivid detail yet exposes the compromises, calculations, and costs that made France's transformation enduring but contested.

Remembering Napoleon (Vol.1-4)

Main Table of Contents

[PREFACE 1836 EDITION.](#)

[PREFACE 1885 EDITION.](#)

[AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.](#)

[NOTE.](#)

[VOLUME I. — 1769-1800](#)

[CHAPTER I](#)

[CHAPTER II.](#)

[CHAPTER III.](#)

[CHAPTER IV.](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI.](#)

[CHAPTER VII.](#)

[CHAPTER VIII.](#)

[CHAPTER IX.](#)

[CHAPTER X.](#)

[CHAPTER XI.](#)

[CHAPTER XII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XV.](#)

[CHAPTER XVI.](#)

[CHAPTER XVII.](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIX.](#)

[CHAPTER XX.](#)

[CHAPTER XXI](#)

[CHAPTER XXII.](#)

[CHAPTER XXIII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XXV.](#)
[CHAPTER XXVI.](#)
[CHAPTER XXVII.](#)
[CHAPTER XXVIII.](#)
[CHAPTER XXIX.](#)
[CHAPTER XXX](#)
[CHAPTER XXXI.](#)
[CHAPTER XXXII.](#)
[CHAPTER XXXIII.](#)
[CHAPTER XXXIV.](#)
[CHAPTER XXXV](#)

[VOLUME II. — 1800-1803](#)

[CHAPTER I.](#)
[CHAPTER II.](#)
[CHAPTER III.](#)
[CHAPTER IV.](#)
[CHAPTER V.](#)
[CHAPTER VI.](#)
[CHAPTER VII.](#)
[CHAPTER VIII.](#)
[CHAPTER IX.](#)
[CHAPTER X.](#)
[CHAPTER XI.](#)
[CHAPTER XII.](#)
[CHAPTER XIII.](#)
[CHAPTER XIV](#)
[CHAPTER XV](#)
[CHAPTER XVI](#)
[CHAPTER XVII.](#)

CHAPTER XVIII.
CHAPTER XIX.
CHAPTER XX.
CHAPTER XXI.
CHAPTER XXII.
CHAPTER XXIII.
CHAPTER XXIV.
CHAPTER XXV.
CHAPTER XXVI.
CHAPTER XXVII.
CHAPTER XXVIII.
CHAPTER XXIX.
CHAPTER XXX.
CHAPTER XXXI.
CHAPTER XXXII.
CHAPTER XXXIII.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

VOLUME III. — 1805-1814

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.
CHAPTER IV.
CHAPTER V.
CHAPTER VI.
CHAPTER VII.
CHAPTER VIII.
CHAPTER IX.
CHAPTER X.
CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.
CHAPTER XIII.
CHAPTER—XIV.
CHAPTER XV.
CHAPTER XVI.
CHAPTER XVII.
CHAPTER XVIII.
CHAPTER XIX.
CHAPTER XX.
CHAPTER XXI.
CHAP XXII.
CHAPTER XXIII.
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV.
CHAPTER XXVI.
CHAPTER XXVII.
CHAPTER XXVIII.
CHAPTER XXIX.
CHAPTER XXX.
CHAPTER XXXI.
CHAPTER XXXII.
CHAPTER XXXIII.
CHAPTER XXXIV.
CHAPTER XXXV.
CHAPTER XXXVI.

VOLUME IV. — 1814-1821

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

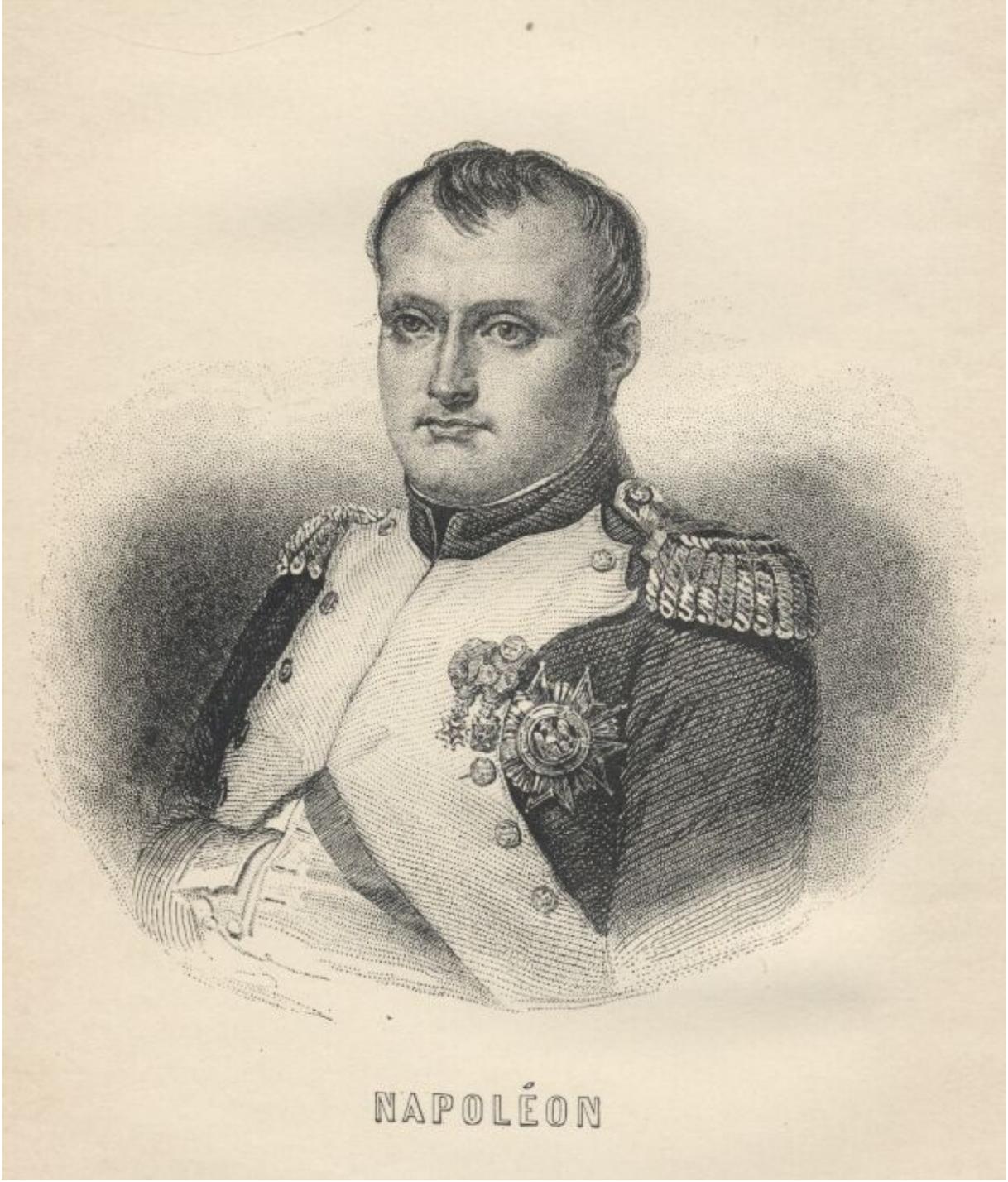
CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII



NAPOLÉON

PREFACE 1836 EDITION.

[Table of Contents](#)

In introducing the present edition of M. de Bourrienne's Memoirs to the public we are bound, as Editors, to say a few Words on the subject. Agreeing, however, with Horace Walpole that an editor should not dwell for any length of time on the merits of his author, we shall touch but lightly on this part of the matter. We are the more ready to abstain since the great success in England of the former editions of these Memoirs, and the high reputation they have acquired on the European Continent, and in every part of the civilised world where the fame of Bonaparte has ever reached, sufficiently establish the merits of M. de Bourrienne as a biographer. These merits seem to us to consist chiefly in an anxious desire to be impartial, to point out the defects as well as the merits of a most wonderful man; and in a peculiarly graphic power of relating facts and anecdotes. With this happy faculty Bourrienne would have made the life of almost any active individual interesting; but the subject of which the most favourable circumstances permitted him to treat was full of events and of the most extraordinary facts. The hero of his story was such a being as the world has produced only on the rarest occasions, and the complete counterpart to whom has, probably, never existed; for there are broad shades of difference between Napoleon and Alexander, Caesar, and Charlemagne; neither will modern history furnish more exact parallels, since Gustavus Adolphus, Frederick the Great, Cromwell, Washington, or

Bolivar bear but a small resemblance to Bonaparte either in character, fortune, or extent of enterprise. For fourteen years, to say nothing of his projects in the East, the history of Bonaparte was the history of all Europe!

With the copious materials he possessed, M. de Bourrienne has produced a work which, for deep interest, excitement, and amusement, can scarcely be paralleled by any of the numerous and excellent memoirs for which the literature of France is so justly celebrated.

M. de Bourrienne shows us the hero of Marengo and Austerlitz in his night-gown and slippers—with a 'trait de plume' he, in a hundred instances, places the real man before us, with all his personal habits and peculiarities of manner, temper, and conversation.

The friendship between Bonaparte and Bourrienne began in boyhood, at the school of Brienne^[1], and their unreserved intimacy continued during the most brilliant part of Napoleon's career. We have said enough, the motives for his writing this work and his competency for the task will be best explained in M. de Bourrienne's own words, which the reader will find in the Introductory Chapter.

M. de Bourrienne says little of Napoleon after his first abdication and retirement to Elba in 1814: we have endeavoured to fill up the chasm thus left by following his hero through the remaining seven years of his life, to the "last scenes of all" that ended his "strange, eventful history,"—to his deathbed and alien grave at St. Helena. A completeness will thus be given to the work which it did not before possess, and which we hope will, with the other additions and improvements already alluded to, tend to give

it a place in every well-selected library, as one of the most satisfactory of all the lives of Napoleon.

LONDON, 1836.

PREFACE 1885 EDITION.

[Table of Contents](#)

The Memoirs of the time of Napoleon may be divided into two classes—those by marshals and officers, of which Suchet's is a good example, chiefly devoted to military movements, and those by persons employed in the administration and in the Court, giving us not only materials for history, but also valuable details of the personal and inner life of the great Emperor and of his immediate surroundings. Of this latter class the Memoirs of Bourrienne are among the most important.

Long the intimate and personal friend of Napoleon both at school and from the end of the Italian campaigns in 1797 till 1802—working in the same room with him, using the same purse, the confidant of most of his schemes, and, as his secretary, having the largest part of all the official and private correspondence of the time passed through his hands, Bourrienne occupied an invaluable position for storing and recording materials for history. The Memoirs of his successor, Meneval, are more those of an esteemed private secretary; yet, valuable and interesting as they are, they want the peculiarity of position which marks those of Bourrienne, who was a compound of secretary, minister, and friend. The accounts of such men as Miot de Melito, Raederer, etc., are most valuable, but these writers were not in that close contact with Napoleon enjoyed by Bourrienne. Bourrienne's position was simply unique, and we can only regret that he did not occupy it till the end of the Empire. Thus it is natural that his Memoirs should have

been largely used by historians, and to properly understand the history of the time, they must be read by all students. They are indeed full of interest for every one. But they also require to be read with great caution. When we meet with praise of Napoleon, we may generally believe it, for, as Thiers (*Consulat.*, ii. 279) says, Bourrienne need be little suspected on this side, for although he owed everything to Napoleon, he has not seemed to remember it. But very often in passages in which blame is thrown on Napoleon, Bourrienne speaks, partly with much of the natural bitterness of a former and discarded friend, and partly with the curious mixed feeling which even the brothers of Napoleon display in their *Memoirs*, pride in the wonderful abilities evinced by the man with whom he was allied, and jealousy at the way in which he was outshone by the man he had in youth regarded as inferior to himself. Sometimes also we may even suspect the praise. Thus when Bourrienne defends Napoleon for giving, as he alleges, poison to the sick at Jaffa, a doubt arises whether his object was to really defend what to most Englishmen of this day, with remembrances of the deeds and resolutions of the Indian Mutiny, will seem an act to be pardoned, if not approved; or whether he was more anxious to fix the committal of the act on Napoleon at a time when public opinion loudly blamed it. The same may be said of his defence of the massacre of the prisoners of Jaffa.

Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne was born in 1769, that is, in the same year as Napoleon Bonaparte, and he was the friend and companion of the future Emperor at the military school of Brienne-le-Chateau till 1784, when

charter broadly comparable to the 1814 Charter of Louis XVIII.

245 A mass public convocation called by Napoleon in the spring of 1815 to ratify constitutional changes and hold ceremonial acts (including the presentation of the Acte additionnel); it was a major political spectacle near Paris during the Hundred Days.

246 A term (*fédérés*) for armed volunteers or national-guard detachments mobilized for public demonstrations and military service; it dates from the Revolutionary era and was reused in 1815 for politically charged crowds and festival troops.

247 A British warship (commonly HMS Bellerophon) that received Napoleon in July 1815 and temporarily held him before his transfer to HMS Northumberland for exile.

248 A small Mediterranean island off the Tuscan coast where Napoleon was exiled in 1814; he escaped from Elba in early 1815 and returned to France for the period known as the Hundred Days.

249 The title used for the British prince acting on behalf of his incapacitated father, King George III; in 1815 this referred to the future King George IV.

250 The tri-coloured cockade was a ribbon badge in blue, white and red that became the emblem of the French

Revolution and later of Napoleonic and national allegiance; wearing it signalled political loyalty and was often used as a public badge of factional support.

251 The Barriere de la Chapelle was one of the gates in the Wall of the Farmers-General on Paris's northern edge, functioning as a staffed customs/entry point in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and used during blockades or controls on movement.

252 The 'Hundred Days' refers to Napoleon's return from exile on Elba and his brief restoration to power in 1815, the period between his landing in March 1815 and his final defeat and second abdication around June–July 1815.

253 The French phrase for the 'Hundred Days' (March–July 1815) marking Napoleon's return from exile on Elba, his brief restoration to power, and his final defeat at Waterloo followed by second abdication.

254 An agreement signed in April 1814 that ended Napoleon's rule and prescribed his exile to Elba with certain pensions and territories for his family; many of its provisions were later disputed or not fully implemented.

255 The Austrian Archduchess Marie Louise, Napoleon's second wife and mother of his son (Napoleon II); after 1814 she returned to Austria and later governed Parma, eventually forming a long personal relationship with Count Neipperg.

256 Adam Albert von Neipperg, an Austrian general who became a close companion and later husband of Maria Louisa after her separation from Napoleon; he figures in accounts of her post-Imperial life.

257 The Austrian title granted to Napoleon's son (Napoleon II) by his grandfather Emperor Francis in 1818; the duke lived and was educated in Austria and died there in 1832.

258 HMS Northumberland was the British warship that carried Napoleon from Britain toward St. Helena; it was responsible for his transport after transfer from the Bellerophon.

259 The mizenmast is the aft-most (rear) mast on a three-masted sailing ship; the text uses it to describe the part of the Northumberland where certain cabins and rooms were located.

260 A stretch of the northeastern Atlantic Ocean off the western coasts of France and northern Spain, commonly crossed by ships sailing from England to the Atlantic or around Spain.

261 A headland on the northwest coast of Spain long used as a navigational landmark for ships doubling the Iberian Peninsula on Atlantic voyages; its name historically suggested the 'end of the earth.'

262 A nickname given aboard the Northumberland to a particular cannon on the ship's deck where Napoleon habitually sat and conversed; it indicates a familiar, informal spot rather than an official title.

263 The principal settlement (often written Jamestown) on the island of St. Helena, where Napoleon and his suite were initially lodged after disembarkation.

264 A small pavilion or summer-house near Jamestown on St. Helena that served as Napoleon's temporary lodging on arrival before relocation to Longwood.

265 Longwood House (often shortened to Longwood) was the estate on St. Helena selected as Napoleon's principal residence during his exile and where he spent his final years.

266 Sir George Cockburn, a senior Royal Navy officer who commanded British naval operations related to Napoleon's surrender and accompanied parts of his transfer; he features in contemporary accounts of Napoleon's voyage and early time on St. Helena.

267 The British military officer appointed Governor of St. Helena in 1816 whose strict administration and disputes with Napoleon and his entourage are widely recorded and controversial in accounts of the exile.