
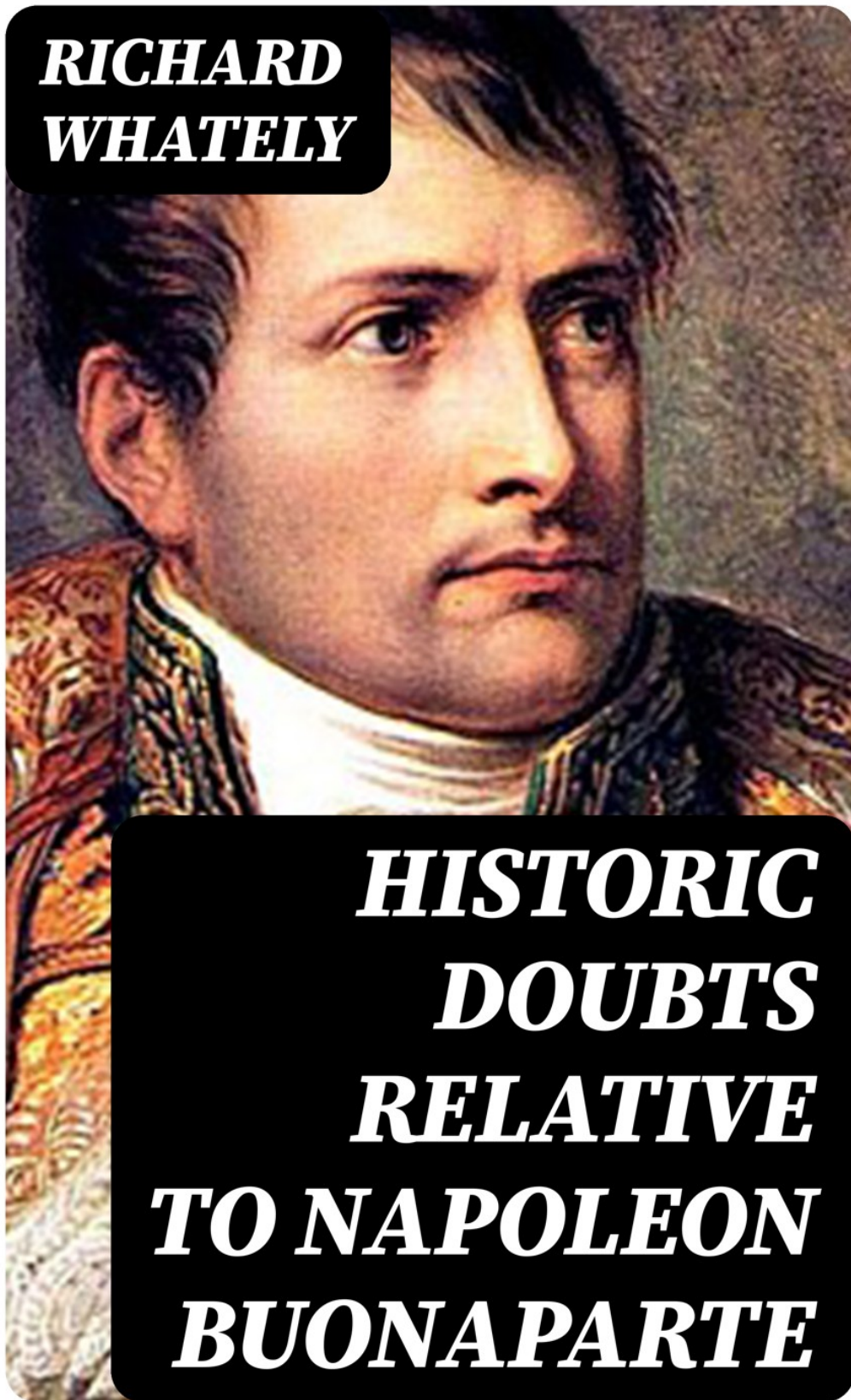


***RICHARD
WHATELY***

A detailed oil painting portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte, showing him from the chest up. He has dark, wavy hair and is looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark, ornate military-style jacket with gold embroidery over a white high-collared shirt.

***HISTORIC
DOUBTS
RELATIVE
TO NAPOLEON
BUONAPARTE***

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Historic Doubts Relative To Napoleon Buonaparte

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PREFACE.

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Several of the readers of this little work (first published in 1819) have derived much amusement from the mistakes of others respecting its nature and object. It has been by some represented as a serious attempt to inculcate universal scepticism; while others have considered it as a jeu d'esprit, &c.[1] The author does not, however, design to entertain his readers with accounts of the mistakes which, have arisen respecting it; because many of them, he is convinced, would be received with incredulity; and he could not, without an indelicate exposure of individuals, verify his anecdotes.

But some sensible readers have complained of the difficulty of determining *what* they are to believe. Of the existence of Buonaparte, indeed, they remained fully convinced; nor, if it were left doubtful, would any important results ensue; but if they can give no *satisfactory reason* for their conviction, how can they know, it is asked, that they may not be mistaken as to other points of greater consequence, on which they are no less fully convinced, but on which all men are *not* agreed? The author has accordingly been solicited to endeavour to frame some canons which may furnish a standard for determining what evidence is to be received.

This he conceives to be impracticable, except to that extent to which it is accomplished by a sound system of Logic; including under that title, a portion—that which relates to the "Laws of Evidence"—of what is sometimes

treated under the head of "Rhetoric." But the full and complete accomplishment of such an object would confer on Man the unattainable attribute of infallibility.

But the difficulty complained of, he conceives to arise, in many instances, from men's *mis-stating the grounds of their own conviction*. They are convinced, indeed, and perhaps with very sufficient reason; but they imagine this reason to be a different one from what it is. The evidence to which they have assented is applied to their minds in a different manner from that in which they believe that it is—and suppose that it ought to be—applied. And when challenged to defend and justify their own belief, they feel at a loss, because they are attempting to maintain a position which is not, in fact, that in which their force lies.

For a development of the nature, the consequences, and the remedies of this mistake, the reader is referred to "Hinds on Inspiration," pp. 30-46. If such a development is to be found in any earlier works, the Author of the following pages at least has never chanced to meet with any attempt of the kind.[2]

It has been objected, again, by some persons of no great logical accuracy of thought, that as there would not be any *moral blame* imputable to one who should seriously disbelieve, or doubt, the existence of Buonaparte, so neither is a rejection of the Scripture-histories to be considered as implying anything morally culpable.

The same objection, such as it is, would apply equally to many of the Parables of the New Testament. It might be said, for instance, that as a woman who should decline taking the trouble of searching for her lost "piece of silver,"