

fashion of the present day so that the readers of this letter twenty years from now — if it has any — will be able to understand it readily?

Have you ever seen our municipal firemen at drill? They have a long canvas tube, down the inside of which the dwellers on the fourth story of a burning building can slide without too much danger. Well, cut up this long canvas tube in lengths of about a woman's height, so that her feet can stick out below and her head and neck above, and you will have the design of the modern gown. Hitherto there has been nothing more absurd in the way of feminine attire. This is the ultimate limit. This inoffensive-appearing tube is really designed to mask the form of a woman's body — not out of modesty,

like the touching costumes of our Sisters of Charity, but in order that the wearer, inscribed between these parallel lines, may not be distinguished in any way from a boy of the same age, as he would appear were he enclosed in such a sheet.

Behold the great discovery of messieurs the modern couturiers! This boyification is completed by the radical fashion of chopping off the hair on a level with the neck, but as no fashion — not even the most simplified in appearance — could do without some kind of absurdity, these boyified women continue to wear Chinese slippers which uncover three quarters of the foot and hunch up the heel on a stilt ten centimetres high with nothing masculine about it.

NAPOLEON'S HANDWRITING

BY OTTO ROBOLSKY

From *Vossische Zeitung*, February 29
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NAPOLEON'S handwriting is one of the most remarkable and interesting that can be imagined, though it presents the greatest puzzles to everyone and especially to the graphologist. This minute, hasty, obscure scrawl, which not infrequently is wholly illegible, seems a complete contradiction of the genius's character. It cannot be explained, at least completely, even by the increasing burden of work that devolved upon him.

When he was at the height of his fame, Napoleon bestowed a pension upon his former writing-master, but — as one of his secretaries later observed — never was pension less deserved. He

was quite right. Even as a young man, Napoleon already wrote a very bad hand. His letters from the military school at Brienne and those he wrote a few years later in Paris — to the composition of which he devoted an incredible amount of pains — are nevertheless written in an obscure and awkward script which contrasts sharply with the striking freedom and clarity of his judgment. In later life Napoleon was well aware that his hand was execrable. He found the exertion of writing disagreeable, for it seemed as though his hand could not keep pace with the swift flight of his thought; and with every

year of his rise, letters in his own handwriting become less and less frequent. He wrote them as a rule only to his wife, or in any case only to his nearest relatives. Other letters he dictated, adding only his signature and occasionally short supplementary notes. For the average collector possession of a holograph letter of Napoleon's belongs to the category of dreams never to be fulfilled. In recent years even those scraps of writing which he merely signed have risen in price in spite of the fact that new ones are continually coming on the market and that more than twenty-five thousand extant letters, documents, and other communications are known to bear his signature. To be sure, not all these signatures are complete, for they too underwent a gradual evolution.

In Napoleon's early letters we find his name written in the original Italian form, 'Buonaparte,' and sometimes, during the lifetime of his father, 'Buonaparte Fils.' Even when he was Chief of the French Army he still retained the Italian form of his name. At this particular time his handwriting is unusually large and legible, and his signature is completed by a vigorous stroke underneath. A close connection between the letters *a* and *p* — which is occasionally found even earlier and which later becomes so characteristic in the name 'Napoleon' — is also very marked. When he became General-in-Chief of the Italian Army, he abandoned the Italian form of the name and definitely adopted the French 'Bonaparte,' not only in his signature, but also in his set headings. He retained this method of signature also as First Consul, and at this time the name is almost always written out complete, although its outline is constantly becoming hastier and more cursory. As Emperor he signed himself 'Napoléon.' Meanwhile, as time went on, the name was becoming

constantly less legible, more compact, and gradually shortening first to 'Napol' and then to 'Nap' and finally to a simple 'N,' though, with all its illegibility, the stroke below is never missing.

This development is closely related to Napoleon's methods of work, in which its explanation lies. One of his secretaries, Baron Fain, says in his memoirs: 'Napoleon wrote very badly. The alertness of his mind could not accommodate itself to the awkwardness of his hand. He set down only incomplete letters and scrawled the end of each word. He cast all the requirements of good writing unscrupulously to the winds, and the irregularity of his hand was so bad that he himself had the greatest trouble to read it. That is why he took to dictating, became accustomed to it, and employed this method of working with the greatest skill. His dictation was very much like an interview in which he would turn to his correspondent as if the latter stood there before him and could answer him by word of mouth. Anyone listening at the door might well have thought that they stood there face to face. Taking dictation was his secretary's chief business. It was rarely necessary to write anything of your own. Napoleon did it all himself, but he dictated so fast that the task was hard, and rare was the pen that could follow him.'

'When he first set to work he usually began rather slowly, but as he went on he spoke faster and faster as if his mouth warmed up with talking. Then he would rise and move about the room with great strides, and by the time the clock had marked the passing of an hour the swiftness of his stride would mark the increasing or slackening speed of his thought and almost the movement of his phrases. When at length he reached the dominant idea — and each day had its own — he would overflow. This principal idea would recur after-

ward in all his letters and conversations. Even the words would be retained, so deep and vivid was the impression of his thought in its first form. If one of his chords was struck, it sounded ever after with remarkable exactness in the same tone, and these ready-made phrases were a great aid to the secretary who had to transcribe them. He could see them coming just like the theme of a rondo, and a single sign was enough to mark their place.

'If the Emperor stepped out of his cabinet, his secretary would employ the moment thus left at his disposal to set the papers on the writing-table in order and to collect the answered letters with which the floor was strewn. He was also able to read them over and check most accurately what he had written. In doubtful cases the expression and the circumstances of the petition would show the exact sense of the answer. A secretary was only too glad to be able to set his dictation in order by such means, for it was hard to catch it on the wing. Napoleon, for example, would occasionally confuse technical expressions and proper names so that they were quite unrecognizable. He would often say "Elbe" for "Ebro," "Salamanca" for "Smolensk" and vice versa. I no longer recollect what Polish word in his vocabulary represented Bada-joz, but I do remember that when he spoke of Rysopo he meant the stronghold of Osopo.'

There were restful intervals in the work when Napoleon would break off for short periods to take up a book, but the arrival of a notice or a dispatch often brought a stormy interview of which Baron Fain gives a vivid and amusing description:—

'Various secretaries would be called in, pen in hand, and before they had had a chance to find seats the Emperor

would call out: "Write!" They could hardly get down quick enough the ideas that streamed from his lips. Napoleon would go from one to another dictating. Ménével would be writing an answer to a Marshal, Fain an order to a Minister, Monnier the outline of a decree, d'Albe an article to appear in the next morning's *Moniteur*; while his aid-de-camp was writing an order for hasty dispatch. He would have done still more dictating, but revision did not go so fast as dictation, and a larger number of secretaries was impractical. A first letter would be laid before him for signature, he would sign it, call for a courier, fold the letter himself, and perhaps burn his fingers if he tried to seal it in person.'

This was his way of working in Paris, and when possible he kept the same staff with him in the field. The first copy of a report on a battle was always sent to the Empress. He never let a bag for a courier close without putting in a word for his wife, though it was always a great trial to him to write legibly.

Even after his fall he kept up the custom of dictating. Immediately on arriving at St. Helena and before settling in Longwood, while he was still at The Briars, the countryseat of the merchant Balcombe, where he had temporary residence, he began to work on his memoirs. He would dictate them to his chamberlain, LasCases, whose son Emmanuel also served sometimes as secretary. Later at Longwood other gentlemen took his dictation, especially Montholon, to whom on the fifteenth of April, 1821, he dictated his will. One day later, with his own hand he wrote a short codicil. A few days after, his condition began to grow steadily worse. On the thirtieth of April for the first time his mind was confused, and the weary struggle with death began which was to last until the fifth of May.

A PAGE OF VERSE

THE VAGRANT

BY PAULINE SLENDER

[*Sunday Times*]

I WILL leave the dust of the City street and the noise of the busy town
For the windy moor and the high hill and the peat-stream flowing brown;
I will keep my watch by the camp-fires where the white cliffs lean to the sea,
And dawn shall wake me with golden hands and the rain shall walk with me.

I will seek the place where gypsies roam and strange, wild songs are sung;
I will find once more the magic paths I knew when earth was young,
And the stars will give me comradeship and the wind will be my friend,
And I will send you the faery gold that lies at the rainbow's end.

Stretch not your hands, nor bid me stay, I hear the white road's call,
The sun hath kissed the buds from sleep, and I am one with them all;
But I will send you a golden cloak and a pair of silver shoon,
And a dream that the fairies spin from stars on the other side of the moon.

THE BROKEN TOOL

BY EDWARD CARPENTER

[*The Nation and the Athenæum*]

THE broken tool lies:

In the dust it lies forgotten — but the building goes on without delay.

Who knows what dreams it had — this rusty old shaftless thing?

(Or fancied it had: for what it supposed its own thoughts, were they not the thoughts of the artificer who wielded it? — and *his* thoughts, were they not those of the architect?)

Dreams of the beautiful finished structure, white with its myriad pinnacles,
against the sky;

Dreams of days and years of busy work, and the walls growing beneath it;
Dreams of its own glory — absurd dreams of a temple built with one tool!

Who knows? — and who cares?

In the dust it lies broken now and unnoticed;

But the building goes on without delay.