



# Working with Napoleon: Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte by His Private Secretary

*Baron Claude-Francois de Meneval*

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To be employed by a towering military and political figure such as Napoleon Bonaparte during the entire period of his active life allows an astute and precise observer, such as the baron, an incomparable opportunity to record history in the making. Claude-François de Méneval (1778-1850), a member of the old nobility, was the private secretary, close confidant, and trusted collaborator of the emperor from 1802 to Waterloo in 1815. He was to remain particularly close to the Empress Marie-Louise. Thanks to the author's private notes and his phenomenal memory, these memoirs were first published in Paris in 1827, and in an English translation in 1894 contemporaneously in London and New York. The book immediately became a key document for historians of the Napoleonic period not only because of the detailed view it provides of Napoleon as leader and statesman, his family, and the history of the period, but also because of its high literary quality and incomparable historical interest. While there are many other memoirs of Napoleon by those who worked at his side, few provide such a vivid portrait of the man, his entourage, and his action as a leader. Méneval, who was also a novelist and great letter writer, knew most of the French men and women of letters of his time, and those towering figures also occupy by their presence the pages of this extraordinary book.

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