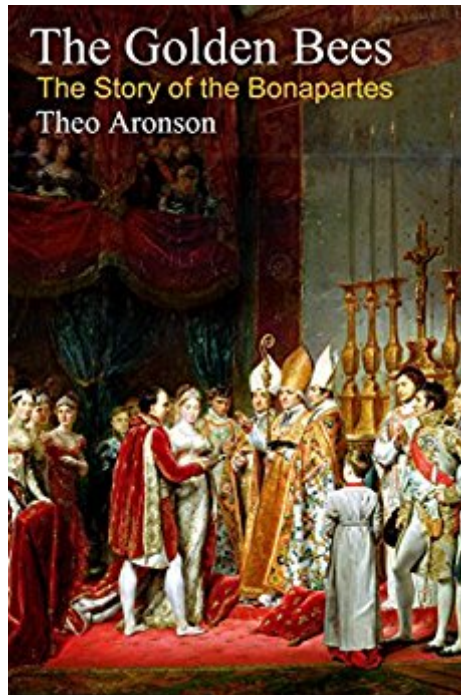


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The Golden Bees: The Story Of The Bonapartes



Synopsis

Napoleon III, being accused on one occasion of having nothing of the Great Napoleon about him, replied with as much exasperation as wit, that he did, on the contrary, have his relations. This book is a domestic chronicle of the incredible Bonaparte family, a greedy, amorous, quarrelsome and hot-blooded Corsican clan who provided nineteenth-century Europe and America not only with two French emperors, but also with a dazzling assortment of pretenders and parvenus, statesmen and eccentrics, great ladies and adventuresses. Plunged on to the thrones of Europe by the career of Napoleon I, who probably took better care of his family than any conqueror in history, the Bonapartes survived the wreck of the two empires they ruled, buzzing around the honeypots of the continent with all the persistence of the imperial bees of Napoleon's crest. This is a personal history, not a political one. It is the family, with its eccentricities, vulgarities and fascinations manifesting themselves in generation after generation, which holds the centre of the stage. The great political, economic and military events of the time are heard dimly as 'noises off'. Napoleon I himself appears as son, brother, husband, father and above all as founder of a dynasty, rather than as a great public figure. But about the family, its feuds, its treacheries, its love affairs, its moments of greatness and of human tragedy, Mr Aronson seems to have missed not one good story, from the squabbles of Napoleon's rebellious sisters over the carrying of Josephine's train, to Hitler's remarkable deal with Petain for the return of the body of the Duke of Reichstadt to his father's tomb in the Invalides. Mr Aronson paints his family portrait with a wealth of detail based on many years of research with historical documents and original records, letters, memoirs and family diaries for, in the end, no one seems to have been able to tell quite such a lurid tale about a Bonaparte as another Bonaparte.

Book Information

File Size: 1737 KB

Print Length: 436 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: Thistle Publishing (December 15, 2015)

Publication Date: December 15, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B019FCXK0U

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #97,118 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #49 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Europe > France #71 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > France #85 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Royalty

Customer Reviews

Even if you have read any of Napoleon's many biographies | You will learn a great deal about his vast family, spread across Europe and America for more than a century. Fascinating insights into the Second Empire.

A very interesting story about the French Emperor's family and descendants up to the 20th century, with the emphasis in the first and second empires. Not a history of battles and heroic feats but a study of the personalities of brothers, sisters, children and grand children with their spouses, all very human and interesting with their passions, triumphs, errors and disasters, which abound. A well told story and a book hard to put down.

The complexity of Napoleon's family life, with numerous brothers, sisters, wives, children, in laws---and his ever present mother---makes one wonder how he ever had time to fight and to win battles. Well written and all shockingly real.

I knew all about the first empire but not as much about the names and faces that followed it. This book provided that information in a fun and interesting read.

I liked it because of it's history

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