

Personalități franceze văzute de N. Iorga

(Edition by Sanda-Maria Ardeleanu and Alexandrina Ioniță.

Index of persons by Alexandrina Ioniță, Casa Editorială Demiurg, Iași, 2015, 166 p.)

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Discovering the University from Suceava, its people and „products” was, for me, a wonderful surprize, such is the case with many master of PhD students who come from other places. Discovering the CISL was, however, a lifetime breakthrough, through its high academic standard towards which it forces us to hope and reach. To discover N. Iorga from another perspective made me go beyond my highest expectations. It is enough to hear or to see his name written down in order to be enveloped by the feeling that other heights are being placed in front of you and that, for sure, you will never be able to reach them. Although his work is published randomly and only two-three of are his fundamental works, it is created what could be called the „name complex”.

The 2015 CISL placed in front of me that which can be called a book of fine culture and human psychology, which can easily become a fundamental book for any lover of reading: *Personalitățile franceze*, which finds itself only at the first volume, in the Romanian version. I found out with pleasant surprise that there will be also an edition in French, which will be the delight of the **Francophones and Francophiles** because – isn’t it so? –, N. Iorga’s phrase is difficult to read in Romanian, due to its logical and stylistic arabesques – then what about it being in the French language?

Although the texts gathered here are, mostly, obituaries, the vivid style, the energetic verb, the adjective delicately perfumed of his memories, the entire assembly gives you the impression of a *tête-à-tête* dialog with the author, while from somewhere above it seems that the character himself seems to listen, without, however, contesting. In order not to upset in any way the characters from the mentioned gallery, the editors placed them, in the content list, in the alphabetical order, although I would have liked to see the historians placed together, on the other side the literary ones, the politicians and military men separated, because they have spoken enough to each other during their lifetime, and whoever wants to rediscover them goes towards the specialization, not necessarily according to the alphabetical name. But which book is perfect?

Without being perfect, this gallery of *Personalități franceze* offers a wonderful reading, which can open, for example, with the portraits of its former professors, well-known historians, from the École Pratique des Hautes Etudes or Sorbona: Charles Bémont, Jules Michelet, Charles Victor Langlois, Ernest Lavisse, Gabriel Monod. N. Iorga will dedicate, to the latter, his dissertation thesis from École Pratique des Hautes Etudes (*Philippe de Mézières...*), because underneath his wing he modelled himself as researcher of medieval history and with his support he began to publish within „Revue historique”. The memories are surrounded by an unexpected affection and admiration, clearly expressed, exactly the opposite of the way in which N. Iorga made us get used to in his works. Yet the cult for his French Professors’ personality, under whose auspicious he was formed, accompanied him until old age, although the relations with some of them got colder, were interrupted or were renewed later.

Consciously of his professional formation, that most of his research methodology he owes them, N. Iorga lot no opportunity to pay tribute to them, to write to them for the exchange of cultural information or greetings of health and congratulations, to visit them

or to receive their visit, to sustain a lecture at their invitation or to invite them in Romania to lecture and know the country directly, to sketch the personality and the love of history or literature.

The historian, invited often at the French Academy, at Sorbona or at the Elysée Palace, could not leave empty the gallery of the France's presidents, its Foreign Affairs Ministers, the prime-ministers whom he met and who honoured him, often decorating him: Louis Barthou, Aristide Briand, Georges Clemenceau (whom he offered three sequences, one not exactly laudable! – „marele bătrân îndărătnic, stâncosul afirmator de credință”, p. 51), Paul Deschanel, Paul Doumer, Gaston Dumergue, Raymond Poincaré.

By contributing through their diplomatic efforts to the Allies' victory in the Treaties of Versailles' complex, encouraging the affirmation of national states, organized after the First World War, to the negotiation and signing of numerous international treaties between the wars, in the hope of preserving peace, of isolating and diminishing the danger of communism and fascism, the French politicians deserve the historian's praise, for whom peace, culture and human prosperity represented supreme ideals.

Taking refuge in Iași, in 1917, at the same time with the royal family and the Romanian government, N. Iorga knew very well the efforts of the French Military Mission, lead then by the well-known general Henri Mathias Berthelot, and, over the years, he will honour him and he will remember his memory as one of the French who made great and important things for the Romanians and for the saving of their state. In this context, the general Joseph Joffre – in whose honour the pastry-chef Capșa invented the delicious cake with this name! – enjoys himself praising words from the Romanian historian. With the same warmth, Iorga writes about another general, until now unknown, Lafont (two articles), whose death took place on Romanian soil.

The person who wrote the unique *Istorie a literaturilor neoromanice în dezvoltarea și legăturile lor*, in three volumes, could not remain insensible either at the French literary movement, or the meeting of French authors, thus the literature gallery is not hollow. Yet N. Iorga placed special attention on the French, historians or writers, who strived, through their creation – books, studies, articles – to support the unification cause, the independence and the affirmation of the Romanian nation on the European field: Paul Bataillard, Edgar Quinet, Elias Regnault. If he admired Hermiona Asachi for her huge work dedicated to publishing her French husband's work, Edgar Quinet, for Anna Brâncoveanu, countess of Noailles, N. Iorga's words seem to be of sufferance: „*A murit cel mai mare poet francez, care era despre partea tatălui o româncă*” (p. 37).

To these persons, mentioned above only fleetingly, there are added warm memories about Francis Jammes, Pierre Loti, queen Elizabeth's favourite, then highly fashionable, today utterly forgotten, Pierre de Nolhac, Georges Ohnet, Edmond Rostand.

The adventurous personality of the knight La Fayette brought a smile on the face of the austere historian, who managed to build up warm pictures about the hero, for the ideal of brotherhood among nations and democracy, which the marquis embedded in his American dream. Prince Victor Napoleon's portrait, known under the name of Napoleon V (!) or „Napoleon from Bruxelles”, comes to end the first volume of the impressing French personalities, where, with great surprize, the reader will not find the most famous of all, Napoleon I Bonaparte, the one in whom the Romanians, at the centuries' intersection, placed their hopes that he will free them of the Ottoman dominance, the Austrian iron or the Russian „protectorat”. I like to believe that we will find his portrait, undertaken through the merciless thinking of N. Iorga, in the next volume. Then I wonder what other spiritual delights is preparing the collection of great prestige, *Intelectuali români de expresie franceză...*