

her maiden heart, to go to Paris—Paris, the burning desire of all creoles—Paris, after all the narratives and descriptions, which had been made to Josephine, rose before the soul of the young maiden as a golden morning dream, a charming fairy world; and full of gratitude she already loved her future husband, to whom she owed the happiness of becoming acquainted with the city of wonders and pleasures.

She therefore acquiesced without regret at being separated from her parents and from her sister, from the home of all her sweet reminiscences of youth, and joyously, in August of the year 1779, she embarked on board the vessel which was to take her with her father to France.

In the middle of October they both, after a stormy passage, touched the soil of France and announced to their relatives their safe arrival. Alexandre de Beauharnais, full of impatient longings to see his unknown young bride, hastened to Brest to bid her and her father welcome, and to accompany them to Paris.

The first meeting of the young couple decided their future. Josephine, smiling and blushing, avowed to her father that she was willing and ready to marry M. Alexandre Beauharnais; and, the very first day of his meeting with Josephine, Alexandre wrote to his father that he was enchanted with the choice made, and that he felt strongly convinced that, at the side of so charming, sweet, and lovely a being, he would lead a happy and sunny life.

The love of the children had crowned all the schemes of the parents, and on the 13th of December, 1779, the marriage of the young couple took place. On the 13th of December, Mademoiselle Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie became the Viscountess Josephine de Beauharnais.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG BONAPARTE.

IN the same year, 1779, in which Josephine de la Pagerie for the first time left Martinique for France, a vessel which had sailed from Corsica brought to France a boy who, not only as regards Josephine's life, but also as regards all Europe, yea, the whole world, was to be of the highest importance, and who, with the iron step of fatality, was to walk through Europe to subvert thrones and raise up new ones; to tread nations in the dust, and to lift up others from the dust; to break tyranny's chains in which people languished, so as to impose upon them his own chains.

This boy was Napoleon Bonaparte, the son of the advocate Charles de Bonaparte.

From Ajaccio, the principal town of Corsica, came the ship which brought to France the boy, his father, and his two elder brothers. In Ajaccio the family of the Bonapartes had been settled for more than a century. There also Napoleon had passed the first years of his life, in the family circle with his parents, and in joyous amusements with his five brothers and sisters.

His father, Charles de Bonaparte, belonged to one of the noble families of Corsica, and was one of the most influential men on the island. His mother, Letitia Ramolina, was well known throughout the island for her beauty, and the only woman who could have been her rival, for she was her equal in beauty, youth, and grace, was her dearest friend, the beautiful Panonia de Comnène, afterward the mother of the Duchess d'Abrantes.

The beautiful Letitia Ramolina was married to Charles de Bonaparte the same year that her friend Panonia de Comnène became the wife of M. de Permont, a high French

official in Ajaccio. Corsica was then the undisputed property of the kingdom of France, and, however proud the Corsicans were of their island, yet they were satisfied to be called subjects of France, and to have their beautiful island considered as a province of France.

Napoleon Bonaparte was the fifth child of his parents, the favorite of his beautiful mother Letitia, who was the life of the household, the ruler of the family. She governed the house, she educated the children; she knew, with the genuine ability of a housekeeper, of a mother, how to spend with careful frugality the moderate income of her husband; how to economize, and yet how to give to each what was needed. As to the father, in the hours of leisure which business, political debates, and amusements allowed him to give to his home and family, his children were an agreeable recreation, an interesting pastime; and when the children, carried away by the sparkling fire of youth, shouted or cried too loud, the father endeavored to palliate their misdemeanor, and obtain their pardon from their mother. Then Letitia's eyes were fastened with a flaming glance upon her husband, and, imperatively bidding him leave the children, she would say: "Let them alone. Their education concerns you not. I am the one to keep the eyes upon them."

She trained them up with the severity of a father and with the tenderness of a mother. Inexorable against every vice of heart and character, she was lenient and indulgent toward petty offences which sprang up from the inconsiderateness and spiritedness of youth. Every tendency to vulgar sentiments, to mean envy or selfishness, she strove to uproot by galling indignation; but every thing which was great and lofty, all sentiments of honor, of courage, of large-heartedness, of generosity, of kindness, she nursed and cherished in the hearts of her children. It was a glorious sight to contemplate this young mother when with her beautiful,

rosy countenance glowing with enthusiasm and blessedness, she stood among her children, and in fiery, expressive manner spoke to the listening group of the great and brave of old, of the deeds of a Cæsar, of a Hannibal; when she spoke of Brutus, who, though he loved Cæsar, yet, greater than Cæsar, and a more exalted Roman in his love for the republic, sacrificed his love to the fatherland; or when she, with that burning glow which all Corsicans, the women as well as the men, cherish for their home and for the historical greatness of their dear island, told them of the bravery and self-denial even unto death with which the Corsicans for centuries had fought for the freedom of their island; how, faithful to the ancient sacred law of blood, they never let the misdeed pass unpunished; they never feared the foe, however powerful he might be, but revenged on him the evil which he had committed against sister or brother, father or mother.

And when Letitia thus spoke to her children in the beautiful and harmonious language of her country, the eyes of the little Napoleon were all aflame, his childish countenance suddenly assumed a grave expression, and on the little body of the child was seen a man's head, glowing with power, energy, and pride.

These narratives of his mother, these enthusiastic stories of heroes of the past, which the boy, with loud-beating heart, with countenance blanched by mental excitement, gathered from the beautiful lips of his mother, were the highest pleasure of the little Napoleon, and often in future years has the emperor amid his glory thought of those days never to be forgotten, when the child's heart and soul hung on his mother's lips, and listened to her wondrous stories of heroes.

These narratives of Letitia, this enthusiasm which her glowing language awoke in the heart of the child, this whole education which Letitia gave to her children, became the

corner-stone of their future. As a sower, Letitia scattered the seed from which hero and warrior were to spring forth, and the grain which fell into the heart of her little Napoleon found a good soil, and grew and prospered, and became a laurel-tree, which adorned the whole family of the Bonapartes with the blooming crown of immortality.

Great men are ever much more the sons of their mother than of the father, while seldom have great men seen their own greatness survive in their sons. This is a wonderful secret of Nature, which perhaps cannot be explained, but which cannot be denied.

Goethe was the true son of his talented and noble mother, but he could leave as a legacy to his son only the fame of a name, and not his genius. Henry IV., the son of a noble, spiritual and large-hearted Jeanne de Navarre, could not leave to France, which worshipped and loved her king, could not leave to his people, a successor who resembled him, and who would inherit his sharp-sightedness, his prudence, his courage, and his greatness of soul. His son and successor was Louis XIII., a king whose misfortune it was ever to be overruled, ever to be humbled, ever to stand in the shade of two superior natures, which excited his envy, but which he was never competent to overcome; ever overshadowed by the past glories which his father's fame threw upon him, overshadowed by the ruler and mentor of his choice, his minister, the Cardinal de Richelieu, who darkened his whole sad existence.

Napoleon was the son of his mother, the large-hearted and high-minded Letitia Ramolina. But how distant was the son of the hero, who, from a poor second lieutenant, had forced his way to the throne of France! how distant the poor little Duke de Reichstadt from his great father! Even over the life of this son of an eminent father weighed a shadow—the shadow of his father's greatness. Under this shadow which the column of Vendôme

cast from Paris to the imperial city of Vienna, which the steep rock of St. Helena cast even upon the castle of Schönbrunn, under this shadow died the Duke de Reichstadt, the unfortunate son of his eminent father.

The little Napoleon was always a shy, reserved, quiet boy. For hours long he could hide in some obscure corner of the house or of the garden, and sit there with head bent low and eyes closed, half asleep and half dreaming; but when he opened his eyes, what a life in those looks! What animation, what exuberance in his whole being, when awaking from his childish dreams he mixed again with his brothers, sisters, and friends!

Letitia's words and example had penetrated the soul of the child with the highest emotions of honor and human dignity, and the little boy of seven years exhibited oftentimes the sentiments of honor, pride, and obstinacy of a man. Every bodily correction to which he was submitted made him turn pale and tremble, not from pain but for shame, filled him with indignation, and was apt to bring on sickness. In Corsica still prevailed the custom of severe discipline for children, and in all the classes of the school the rod was applied as a means of punishment and reformation. To beat one's wife was considered in Corsica, as everywhere else, an unpardonable brutality; but parents as well as teachers whipped children to mould them into noble, refined, honorable men.

The little Napoleon would not adapt himself to the blessings of this education, and the mere threats of the rod-switching deprived the child of his senses and threw him into convulsions. But though the little Napoleon was gloomy, monosyllabic, and quiet, yet was he from early childhood the favorite of all who knew him, and he already wielded over brothers, sisters, and companions, a wonderful influence.

When a boy of four years old, Letitia sent him to a sort

of play-school, where boys and girls amused themselves together and learned the A B C. The young Napoleon was soon the soul of the little company. The boys obeyed him, and submitted to his will; the girls trembled before him, and yet with a smile they pressed toward him merely to be near him and to have a place at his side. And the four-year child already practised a tender chivalry. One of his little school-companions had made an impression on his heart; he honored her with special favors, sat at her side during the lessons, and when they left school to return home, the little Napoleon never missed, with complete gravity of countenance, to offer his arm to his favorite of five years of age and to accompany her to her home. But the sight of this gallant, with his diminutive, compact, and broad figure, over which the large head, with its earnestness of expression, seemed so incongruous, and which moved on with so much gravity, while the socks fell from the naked calves over the heels—all this excited the merriment of the other children; and when, arm-in-arm with his little schoolmate, he thus moved on, the other urchins in great glee shouted after him: "*Napoleone di mezza calzetta dall'amore à Giacominetta!*" ("Napoleon in socks is the lover of the little Giacominetta!")

The boy endured these taunts with the stoic composure of a philosopher, but never after did he offer his arm to the little Giacominetta, and never afterward did his socks hang down over his heels.

When from this "mixed school" he passed into a boys' school, the little Napoleon distinguished himself above all the other boys by his ambition, his deep jealousy, his perseverance at learning and studying, and he soon became the favorite of the Abbé Recco,* who taught at the royal col-

* Napoleon, in his testament, written at St. Helena, willed a fixed sum of money to this Professor Recco, in gratitude for the instruction given him in his youth.

lege of Ajaccio as professor. A few times every week the worthy professor would gather his pupils in a large hall, to read them lectures upon ancient history, and especially upon the history of Rome; and, in order to give to this hall a worthy and significant ornament, he had it adorned on either side with two large and costly banners, one of which had the initials S. P. Q. R., and represented the standard of ancient Rome; facing it and on the opposite side of the hall was the standard of Carthage.

Under the shadows of these standards were ranged the seats for the scholars, and in the vacant centre of the large hall was the professor's chair, from which the Abbé Recco dictated to his pupils the history of the heroic deeds of ancient Rome.

The elder children sat under the larger standard, under the standard of Rome, and the junior boys immediately opposite, under the standard of Carthage; and as Napoleon Bonaparte was the youngest scholar of the institution, he sat near the Carthaginian standard, whilst his brother Joseph, his senior by five years, had his seat facing him on the Roman side. Though at the commencement of the lectures Napoleon's delight had been great, and though he had listened with enthusiasm to the history of the struggles, and to the martial achievements of the ancient Romans, the little Napoleon soon manifested an unmistakable repugnance to attend these lectures. He would turn pale, as with his brother he entered the hall, and with head bowed low, and dark, angry countenance, took his seat. A few days afterward he declared to his brother Joseph, his lips drawn in by anguish, that he would no more attend the lectures.

"And why not?" asked Joseph, astonished. "Do you take no interest in the Roman history? Can you not follow the lecture?"

The little Napoleon darted upon his brother a look of inexpressible contempt. "I would be a simpleton if the

history of heroes did not interest me," said he, "and I understand everything the good Professor Recco says—I understand it so well that I often know beforehand what his warriors and heroes will do."

"Well, then, since you have such a lively interest in the history of the Romans, why will you no more follow the lectures?"

"No, I will not, I cannot," murmured Napoleon, sadly.

"Tell me, at least, the reason, Napoleon," said his brother.

The boy looked straight before him, for a long time hesitating and undecided; then he threw up his head in a very decided manner, and gazed on his brother with flaming eyes.

"Yes," cried he, passionately, "I will tell you! I can no longer endure the shame to sit down under the standard of the conquered and humiliated Carthaginians. I do not deserve to be so disgraced."

"But, Napoleon," said Joseph, laughing, "why trouble yourself about the standard of the old Carthaginians? One is just as well under it as under the Roman standard."

"Is it, then, the same to you under which standard you sit? Do you not consider it as a great honor to sit under the standard of the victorious Romans?"

"I look upon the one as being without honor, and upon the other as being without shame," said Joseph, smiling.

"If it is so," cried out the little Napoleon, throwing himself on his brother's neck, "if it is for you no great sacrifice, then, I implore you to save me, to make me happy, for you can do it! Let us change seats; give me your place under the standard of Rome, and take my place instead."

Joseph declared himself ready to do so, and when the two brothers came next time to the lecture, Napoleon, with uplifted head and triumphant countenance, took his seat under the standard of victorious Rome.

But soon the expression of joy faded away from his face, and his features were overcast, and with a restless, sad look, he repeatedly turned himself toward his brother Joseph, who sat facing him under the standard of the conquered race.

Silent and sad he went home with Joseph, and when his mother questioned him about the cause of his sorrow, he confessed, with tears in his eyes, that he was a heartless egotist, that he had been unjust and cruel toward Joseph, that he had cheated his brother of his place of honor and had seated himself in it.

It required the most earnest assurances of Joseph that he placed no value whatever on the seat; it required all the persuasiveness and authority of Letitia to appease the boy, and to prevail upon him to resume the conquered seat.*

As the course of instruction which the boys had received in Ajaccio was not sufficient for the times, and for the capacities of his sons, their father passed over to France with Joseph and Napoleon, to take advantage of the favorable resources for a more complete education.

Napoleon saw the time of departure approach with an apparently indifferent mind, only his face was somewhat paler, he was still more monosyllabic and more reserved than before; and his eyes, full of an indescribable expression of tenderness and admiration, followed all the movements of his mother, as if to print deeply in his soul the beloved image, so as to take it with him beyond the seas, in all its freshness and beauty.

He wept not as he bade her farewell; not a word of sorrow or regret did he speak, but he embraced his mother with impassioned fondness, he kissed her hands, her forehead, her large black eyes, he sank down before her and kissed her feet, then sprang up, and, after casting upon her whole figure a deep, glowing look, he rushed away to em-

* "Mémoires du Roi Joseph," vol. i., p. 40.

bark at once, without waiting for brother or father, who were yet bidding a touching farewell to relatives and friends.

Letitia gazed after her Napoleon with glowing and wide-open eyes; she wept not, she complained not, but she pressed her two hands on her heart as if to keep it from breaking asunder, from bleeding to death; then she called all her children around her, and, folding them up in her arms, exclaimed: "Join your hands and pray with me that our little Napoleon may return home to us a noble and great man."

As soon as they had prosperously landed in France, the father placed his two sons in the college of Autun, and then travelled farther on to Paris, there to obtain, through the influence of his patrons and friends, a place for his daughter Marianne (afterward Elise) in St. Cyr, an institution for the daughters of noblemen, and also a place for Napoleon in the military school of Brienne. His efforts were crowned with success; and whilst Joseph remained at college in Autun, Napoleon had to part with him and go to Brienne.

When the brothers bade farewell one to another, Joseph wept bitterly, and his sighs and tears choked the tender words of farewell which his quivering lips would have uttered.

Napoleon was quiet, and as his eye moistened with a tear, he endeavored to hide it, and turned aside ashamed of himself and nearly indignant, for he did not wish the Abbé Simon, one of the professors of the college, who was present at the parting of the brothers, to see his unmanly tenderness.

But the Abbé Simon had seen that tear, and when Napoleon was gone he said to Joseph: "Napoleon has shed but one tear, but that tear proves his deep sorrow as much as all your tears."*

* "Mémoires du Roi Joseph," vol. i., p. 26.

Taciturn and quiet as he had been in Ajaccio, the little Napoleon was equally so at the military school of Brienne, where he remained from his eleventh to his sixteenth year. His character had always something sombre and hidden; his eye seemed turned more inwardly than outwardly; and his fellowship with his books seemed to procure him a more pleasant recreation than the company of his schoolmates, whose childish joys and pleasures he despised or pretended to do so, because his limited pecuniary resources did not allow him to share with them pleasures of an expensive nature.

But, though still and reserved, he always was friendly and courteous to his comrades, grateful for every mark of friendship and kindness, and always ready to protect the young and feeble against the overbearing and the strong, censuring with grave authority every injustice, and with Spartan harshness throwing his contempt into the very face of him who, according to his standard, had offended against honor, the lofty spirit and the dignity of a freeman.

It could not fail that soon Napoleon should win over his schoolmates a marked moral influence; that they would listen to him as if he were their superior; that they should feel something akin to fear in presence of the flashing eyes of this little boy of barely fourteen years, whose pale, expressive countenance, when illumined with anger, almost seemed to them more terrible than that of the irritated face of the teacher, and whom they therefore more willingly and more unconditionally obeyed than the principal of the establishment.

One day the latter had forbidden the scholars to go to the fair in a neighboring locality, because they had lately been guilty of excesses on a similar occasion; and, so as to be sure that the scholars would not trespass against his orders, the principal had the outside gate in the front yard locked.

This last circumstance kindled Napoleon's anger; he considered it as an insult that the scholars should be treated as prisoners.

"Had we been ordered in the name of the law to remain here," cried he, "then honor itself would have claimed from us to remain, for law commands obedience to our superiors. But since we are treated as slaves, who are by main force compelled to submission, then honor claims from us to prove to our oppressors that we are free beings, and that we desire to remain such. We are treated as prisoners of war, kept under lock and bolt, but no one has demanded our word of honor that we will make no effort to escape this subjection. Whosoever has a brave heart and a soul full of honor's love, let him follow me!"

All the youngsters followed him without hesitation. More submissive to this pale, small boy of fourteen years, than to the severe, strong, and exalted principal, none dared oppose him as he stood in the garden, facing a remote place in the wall, and giving orders to undermine it, so as to make an outlet. All obeyed the given orders, all were animated with burning zeal, with cheerful alacrity; and after an hour of earnest labor the work was done, and the passage under the wall completed.

The scholars wanted to rush with jubilant cries through the opening, and gain their freedom outside of the wall, but Napoleon held them back.

"I will go first," said he. "I have been your leader throughout this expedition, now I will be the first to pass out, that upon me may fall the punishment when we are discovered."

The young men fell back silently and respectfully, while, proud and stately as a field-marshal who gives the signal for the battle, Napoleon passed through their ranks, to be the first from the crowd to go through the newly-made passage.

It could not fail that the daring of these "prisoners of war" should be discovered, that the principal should be the very same day informed that the young men had, notwithstanding his strict orders, notwithstanding the closed gate, made a way for themselves, and had visited the prohibited fair, while the principal believed them to be in the garden.

A strict inquiry took place the next morning. With threatening tones, the principal ordered the young men to name him who had guided them to so unheard-of a deed, who had misled them into disobedience and insubordination. But all were still; none wished to be a traitor, not even when the principal promised to all full pardon, full impunity, if they would but name the instigator of their guilty action.

But as no one spoke, as no one would name him, Napoleon gave himself up as the culpable one.

"I alone am guilty," cried he, proudly. "I alone deserve punishment. These have done only what I commanded them—they have but followed my orders, nothing more. The guilt and the punishment are mine alone."

The principal, glad to know the guilty one, kept his promise, and, forgiving the rest, decided to punish only the one who acknowledged himself to have been the leader.

Napoleon was, therefore, sentenced to the severest and most degrading punishment known in the institution—to the so-called "monk's penalty." That is to say, the future young soldier, in the coarse woollen garment of a mendicant friar, was on his knees, to devour his meal from an earthen vessel in the middle of the dining-room, while all the other boys were seated at the table.

A deathly pallor overspread the face of the boy when he heard this sentence. He had been for many days imprisoned in a cell with bread and water, and he had without a murmur submitted to this correction, endured already on a

former occasion, but this degrading punishment broke his courage.

Stunned, as it were, and barely conscious, he allowed the costume of the punishment to be put on, but when he had been led into the dining-room, where all the scholars were gathered for the noonday meal, when he was forced upon his knees, he sank down to the ground with a heavy sigh, and was seized with violent convulsions.

The rector himself, moved with deepest sympathy for the wounded spirit of the boy, hastened to raise up Napoleon. At the same moment rushed into the hall one of the teachers of the institution, M. Patrault, who had just been informed of the execution which was about to be carried out on Napoleon. With tears in his eyes, he hastened to Napoleon, and with trembling hands tore from his shoulders the detestable garment, and broke out at the same time in loud complaints that his best scholar, his first mathematician, was to be dishonored and treated in an unworthy manner.

Napoleon, however, was not always the reserved, grave boy who took no part in the recreations and pleasures of the rest of his young schoolmates. Whenever these amusements were of a more serious, of a higher nature, Napoleon gladly and willingly took a part in them. Now and then in the institution, on festivals, theatrical representations took place, and on these occasions the citizens of Brienne were allowed to be present.

But to maintain respectable order, every one who desired to be present at the representation had to procure a card of admission signed by the principal. On the day of the exhibition, at the different doors of the institution, were posted guards who received the admission cards, and whose strict orders were to let no one pass in without them. These posts, which were filled by the scholars, were under the supervision of superior and inferior officers, and were confided only to the most distinguished and most praiseworthy students.

One day, Voltaire's tragedy, "The Death of Cæsar," was exhibited. Napoleon had the post of honor of a first lieutenant for this festivity, and with grave earnestness he filled the duties of his office.

Suddenly at the entrance of the garden arose a loud noise and vehement recriminations of threatening and abusive voices.

It was Margaret Hauté, the porter's wife, who wanted to come in, though she had no card of admission. She was well known to all the students, for at the gate of the institution she had a little stall of fruits, eggs, milk, and cakes, and all the boys purchased from her every day, and liked to jest and joke with the pleasant and obliging woman.

Margaret Hauté had therefore considered it of no importance to procure a card of admission, which thing she considered to be superfluous for such an important and well-known personage as herself. The greater was her astonishment and anger when admission was refused, and she therefore began to clamor loudly, hoping by this means to attract some of the scholars, who would recognize her and procure her admittance. Meanwhile the post guardian dared not act without superior orders, and the inferior officer hastened to communicate the important event to the first lieutenant, Napoleon de Bonaparte, and receive his decision.

Napoleon, who ordinarily was kind to the fruit-vender, and gladly jested with the humorous and coarse woman, listened to the report of the lieutenant with furrowed brow and dark countenance, and with severe dignity gave his orders: "Remove that woman, who takes upon herself to introduce licentiousness into the camp."*

* Afterward, when First Consul, Napoleon sent for this woman and her husband to come to Paris, and he gave them the lucrative position of porter at the castle of Malmaison, which charge they retained unto their death.