

# LIFE OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

## CHAPTER I.

Napoleon's birthplace.—The Bonaparte family.—The mother's character.—Napoleon's boyhood.—Enters the Military School at Brienne.—Incidents while there.—Revisits Corsica and meets General Paoli.—He is promoted to a place in the Royal Military Academy of Paris.—His fraternal interest.—Receives a Lieutenant's commission.—Falls in love.—Life at Valence.—His appearance at M. Neckar's party.—Is present at the storming of the King's palace by the populace.—France and Napoleon.—Again visits Corsica.—Is arrested.—The flight of the Bonaparte family.—The siege of Toulon.—Junot.—The general assault.—The victory.—The slaughter.—Napoleon appointed on the Coast Survey.—Appointed Chief of Battalion.—Another love-affair.—Family destitution.—Letters.—The Convention and Napoleon.—The insurrection of the Sections.—The defeat.—Eugene and his father's sword.—Napoleon and Josephine.

CORSICA, the third in extent, among the Italian islands, lies in the blue waters of the Mediterranean sea, one hundred miles from France, and fifty from Tuscany. It contains nearly four thousand square miles, and one hundred and eighty thousand inhabitants. Its scenery is varied. Traversed by ranges of mountains, whose summits are covered with perpetual snow, veined with rivers, and abounding in fruitful valleys, the island presents wild and beautiful landscapes. Successively under the sway of the Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Greeks, Goths and Genoese, in 1769 it nominally submitted to the French, though partisan warfare continued many years. The population, chiefly Italians in origin and customs, never developed the resources of their productive soil. Multitudes lived on

chestnuts ; but cherished the love of freedom and independence, indomitable valor, and unrelenting revenge of a wrong.

August 15, 1769, at Ajaccio, two months after the subjugation of Corsica by the French, Letitia Bonaparte gave birth to her second son, Napoleon. His father was of ancient and honorable descent. He was a successful lawyer, but when the French army landed, he enlisted under the command of General Paoli, to fight the battles of his brave countrymen.

His noble wife was from the distinguished family of Ramolini, and was regarded one of the most beautiful maidens of Corsica. She was married at the age of sixteen, and became a widow at thirty-five, with eight living children, and three among the dead. The family group, whose names have been so conspicuous in the annals of France, were Joseph, Napoleon, Lucien, Louis, Jerome, Eliza, Pauline, and Caroline.

Of Napoleon's mother he has given a brief but suggestive sketch : "She had the head of a man on the shoulders of a woman. Left without a guide or protector, she was obliged to assume the management of affairs ; but the burden did not overcome her. She administered everything with a degree of sagacity not to be expected from her age and sex. Her tenderness was joined with severity : she punished, rewarded, all alike ; the good, the bad, nothing escaped her. Losses, privations, fatigue, had no effect upon her ; she endured all, braved all. Ah ! what a woman ! Where look for her equal ?"

She bore within her graceful form the future Emperor, amid the stormy scenes of revolution : and returned from an expedition among the mountains, whither she had followed her husband, to give the world the gifted child. If these facts had nothing to do with the intel-

lectual power and bias of the son, they were significant of his marvelous career upon the battle-field of a hemisphere. Sixteen years later, in 1785, Charles Bonaparte, the father, died at Montpellier, in France, of cancer in the stomach ; an hereditary disease, transmitted to the illustrious son.

Besides the city residence, Madame Bonaparte's brother had a beautiful villa on the sea-shore. Massive rocks stood around it, and the solitude was undisturbed, excepting by the murmur of the waves breaking gently upon the beach, and the merry voices of childhood. Neither the mother, her brother, nor the happy children, dreamed that the delicate feet, whose impression on the sand the advancing tides effaced, were to shake thrones in their march of power, and echo in the palace-halls of many kingdoms.

The ruins of this romantic retreat still bear the name of "Napoleon's Grotto," and stories are told of his solitary reveries under the shadow of the leaning granite, and on the margin of the sea ; of his young love for an Italian girl, Giacominetta ; which, on account of his careless attire, was the subject of a couplet shouted after him in his pastimes at school :

"Napoleon di mezza calgetta,  
Fa l'amore à Giacominetta." \*

He was not an attractive, though remarkable boy. His reserve, and an irritability, which D'Israeli would call "the irritability of genius," repelled familiarity, and even made his brothers and sisters distant, while they recognized his intellectual superiority. A venerable uncle, Lucien Bonaparte, when dying, called the children to his side, and said to Joseph, "You, Joseph, are the eldest ; but Napoleon is the head of the family. Take care to remember my words."

\* "Napoleon with his stockings half off,  
Makes love to Giacominetta."

Napoleon's favorite sport was mimic battle with his miniature brass cannon, displaying the almost invariable fact in the early history of eminent talent; the drift of the mental powers; the direction, under occult and forming influences, of the greatest efficiency and success of a mind which has a work to do, and which but few men, if any other one, could perform. Various incidents disclosed his self-reliance and pride of character.

He was once accused of a fault committed by an associate; but scorning to declare his innocence, he suffered without a complaint the unmerited punishment. At another time, when detected regaling his appetite on figs in an orchard near his home, the proprietor threatened to reveal his guilt to his mother. This was more than he could endure in silence; for he both feared and loved the maternal guide of his youth. With simple eloquence, he pleaded his cause, and gained his suit. Napoleon had heard much of the French invasions and fierce conflicts; and he cordially hated the people who afterward adored him, and to whom he gave his warmest affection. January, 1779, Napoleon, then ten years of age, accompanied his father, who was a member of the deputation representing the Corsican *noblesse*, to the Court of Louis XVI., and entered the military school at Brienne, where Count Marbeuf had obtained for him admission. The parting with his mother was so touching, the impression remained fresh upon his mind during all the years of his stormy life.

The exciting scenes of travel, and the splendor of Paris, were new and strange to the young islander, whose existence dawned and deepened into rosy morning among the ancient dwellings and secluded retreats of the land he cherished. At Brienne, he encountered an unex-

pected embarrassment, which stung his proud spirit. He was an Italian, with limited means of support. Around him were sons of the aristocracy, speaking the language of France, and without disguise, revealing a bitter scorn of his humbler position. His hatred of the French was made intense; and with a threat of revenge for the insult, he withdrew from the associations of the gay scions of a waning nobility, and devoted himself to the severest studies of the institution. In general literature he was not ambitious of excellence, but in the branches which directly told upon the soldier's complete preparation for the field of action, he rapidly rose above all rivals, and stood at the head of the aspiring candidates for military honors. To the students were allowed plots of land, to be used for profit or pleasure according to the choice of each. Napoleon appropriated his portion to solitary study, adding shrubbery and flowers to increase its shade and beauty. Here, as at all times, he nourished that thirst for military glory, which death only quenched, freezing upon his silent lips the shout of conflict, "Tête d'armée!"

During the remarkable winter of 1784, when snow lay in heaps around Brienne, Napoleon rallied the students under his command, to erect, on scientific principles, an immense fortification from the frost-quarry nature had bountifully furnished. The completed fort was the wonder and admiration of thousands. The general of both the besieged and besieging forces, he displayed surprising skill in the frequent sham-fights which occurred before the white walls of the bastions, while the brief winter campaign continued.

Napoleon seriously scarred a comrade's forehead, and amply repaid him in after life, when royal gifts were at his disposal.

His vacations were spent on his native island; and

often in company with the brave and restless Paoli, he was urged by him to enlist in the cause of the patriots. The compliment the Italian gave Napoleon, alluding to his familiar study of Plutarch's Lives, was designed to win the youthful cadet to his banner. He said to him with enthusiasm, "Oh, Napoleon! you do not at all resemble the moderns. You belong to the heroes of Plutarch."

With some allowance made for the romantic coloring and interest thrown over the youth of transcendent genius, it is still apparent that Napoleon made an unusually deep impression on all who knew him. With a frail form, a large head, a clear, penetrating eye, and rare powers of conversation, he gave sure token of pre-eminence among men. In his fifteenth year, he became one of the three students selected annually from the cadets, for promotion to the Royal Military School in the splendid capital of France. The following note from the papers of the War Department, shows the rank and prospects of the Corsican upon his entrance into the Parisian Academy:

"State of the king's scholars eligible to enter into service, or to pass to the school at Paris: Monsieur de Bonaparte (Napoleon), born 15th August, 1769; in height five feet six and a half inches; has finished his fourth season; of a good constitution, health excellent, character mild, honest, and grateful; conduct exemplary; has always distinguished himself by application to mathematics, understands history and geography tolerably well; is indifferently skilled in merely ornamental studies, and in Latin, in which he has only finished his fourth course; would make an excellent sailor; deserves to be passed to the school at Paris."

In his new and aristocratic halls, Napoleon kept his object steadily in view. Turning with contempt from

the means of present display and indulgence, like all great men whose eye has been on an eminence in the future, unseen by common minds, he studied, thought, and dreamed alone of a brilliant and undisputed success in the profession of arms. Though imbued with republican sentiments which not unfrequently gave offense to the loyal subjects of the monarch, and possessed of manly and generous traits of character, yet was he a devotee most ardent of Mars, the deity of his panting ambition. Through all the history of his youth, we do not discover any indications of religious feeling, or sense of moral obligation. The spirit of the age, which was military glory, regardless of the sacrifice of human life in its attainment, fired the unfolding genius of Napoleon. He was not cruel and heartless; but the grandeur of extended conquest, and the prosperity of France, filled his mind with gorgeous visions of his sanguinary career. He displayed his fraternal regard in the attention he now gave to the education of his brother Louis, who in his "Réponse à Sir Walter Scott," refers to it with great affection. Up to this time, he nourished a dislike of the French. The gradual transfer of his interests from Corsica to the land of his adoption, was doubtless effected by the power of new associations, the hopeless struggles of his isolated people, and the magnificent field opening before him in the unquiet realm of Louis XVI., where principles in harmony with his own political bias, were to be the mighty forces of civil commotion.

In September, 1785, when only sixteen years of age, Napoleon appeared before the board of examination, on trial for his first appointment in the royal army. In mathematics, the distinguished astronomer, La Place, was the intellectual inquisitor of the anxious cadets. Bonaparte sustained himself with honor, and so fa-

miliar was he with the pages of history, that Keruglion, who conducted the examination in this department, made the following significant and prophetic memorandum opposite his name: "A Corsican by character and by birth; this young man will distinguish himself in the world, if favored by fortune."

He immediately received the commission to lieutenant in the regiment of artillery Le Fère, and no subsequent promotion thrilled his whole being with more intense delight than this signal of his future destiny.

Soon after, he became interested in his second romance of love, giving evidence of a nature attractively susceptible to the charms of female society, and the fascination of beautiful women. He frequented, among other cultivated families, the house of Madame du Colombier, whose daughter threw over his restless heart the spell of a strong, though transitory attachment. When in after life he alluded to it, he remarks, "We were the most innocent creatures imaginable. We contrived short interviews together. I well remember one which took place on a midsummer's morning, just as the light began to dawn. It will scarcely be credited that all our felicity consisted in eating cherries together." Napoleon's post was at this time at Valence, from which his regiment was removed to Lyons. Embarrassed for want of means to support the rank of even a subordinate officer, he was taken sick, and found, as ever, in the favor his impressive presence won from woman, the most generous attention in the care of a German lady, who was not forgotten when he commanded the resources of a kingdom. He entered the lists as competitor for a prize offered for the best essay upon "the institutions most likely to contribute to human happiness," and received the award.

An Italian gentleman gives an entertaining account

of Napoleon, in a splendid evening party at M. Neckar's. The Bastille had fallen, and the murmurs of an excited populace rose with ominous distinctness around the throne of the king—the first undertone of that revolutionary earthquake, soon to overthrow the entire order of things, and startle the world. Alfieri, Lafayette, Mirabeau, La Grange, and other distinguished Frenchmen, were in the brilliant saloon. Madame de Staël and Josephine adorned the intellectual assemblage. Napoleon, who was introduced by Abbé Raynal, attracted attention by his extraordinary conversational powers.

Allusion was made to the refusal of the soldiers to fire upon the lawless multitude, when he replied in language which is entirely characteristic, and descriptive of his subsequent plan of action: "Excuse me, my lord, if I venture to interrupt you; but as I am an officer, I must claim the privilege of expressing my sentiments. It is true that I am very young, and it may appear presumptuous in me to address so many distinguished men; but during the last three years I have paid intense attention to our political troubles. I see with sorrow the state of our country, and I will incur censure rather than pass unnoticed principles which are not only unsound, but which are subversive of all government. As much as any one I desire to see all abuses, antiquated privileges, and usurped rights annulled. Nay! as I am at the commencement of my career, it will be my best policy as well as my duty, to support the progress of popular institutions, and to promote reform in every branch of the public administration. But as in the last twelve months I have witnessed repeated alarming popular disturbances, and have seen our best men divided into factions, which threaten to be irreconcilable, I sincerely believe that now, more than ever, a

strict discipline in the army is absolutely necessary for the safety of our constitutional government, and for the maintenance of order. Nay! if our troops are not compelled unhesitatingly to obey the commands of the executive, we shall be exposed to the blind fury of democratic passions, which will render France the most miserable country on the globe. The ministry may be assured that, if the daily increasing arrogance of the Parisian mob is not repressed by a strong arm, and social order rigidly maintained, we shall see not only this capital, but every other city in France, thrown into a state of indescribable anarchy, while the real friends of liberty, the enlightened patriots, now working for the best good of our country, will sink beneath a set of demagogues, who with louder outcries for freedom on their tongues, will be, in reality, but a horde of savages, worse than the Neros of old."

His next elevation in military rank, was the first lieutenantancy, conferred upon him the same year.

He was in Paris the 20th of June, 1793, when the mob went surging through the streets, toward the Tuileries; and he hastened to the scene of action. He saw it all: the royal garden thronged with exasperated men brandishing their various weapons, and the trembling monarch in the balcony of his palace wearing the Jacobin's red cap.

His indignation was kindled toward the masses governed by passion, and blindly bent on regicide, and his scornful pity awakened in behalf of the yielding monarch, unequal to the nation's crisis. Turning to Bourrienne, with whom he was walking, he exclaimed, "What madness! he should have blown four or five hundred of them into the air, and the rest would have taken to their heels." His conscious power found expression in a letter to the king, offering to save his

reeling throne, and command the troops which should quiet the insurgents. But no reply was made to the unknown writer. Seven months later, the monarch's head rolled upon the guillotine in front of his palace, amid the roll of drums, and the frantic cry of myriads, "Vive la Republique!" There is the liability among the common people to impulsive, fruitless, and even disastrous outbreaks of feeling, just in proportion as there is a want of intellectual culture combined with a fixed and lively sense of moral obligation. Enthusiasm is a natural element of the soul, and healthful, if there be these guiding elements of power. And there is no evidence that an excitement, which rocks a nation, is injurious, unless it appear without the vitality of truth and uncontrolled by the mandate of reason, and the acknowledged principles of religious responsibility. The American Revolution was a sublime illustration of this law of mind, and Washington the individual representative of the balance of powers—the mental and moral harmony—which is so rare among even great men. His entire being obeyed the established laws designed to govern it, with the beautiful uniformity with which the tides ebb and flow, under the attractive force of the moon. His patriotic fervor and sleepless energies from his boyhood, were always within the confines of sober reason, and enlightened conscience. The French revolutionists were fatally deficient in both the safeguards of a popular movement; and Bonaparte, intellectually vastly superior to Washington, with a majestic self-reliance, by early education and national character was made of different mold. In the one, self was merged in the highest good of the people; in the other, self maintained its supremacy through all the noblest plans and fiercest battles for France.

At this awakening period, he regarded the populace

as of little worth, unfit for freedom, and himself as the stern disciplinarian, who could teach them subjection, and gathering into his hands the reins of authority, cover the flag of his country, and his own ample brow with glory.

He revisited Corsica. General Paoli, whose residence, since the last ineffectual struggle of the island for freedom, had been in England, was reanimated with hope when the wheels of revolution began to roll; and after a flattering welcome in Paris, was appointed the governor of his people. He soon discovered the rapid development of licentious liberty and lawlessness in France, and declared his aversion to the demoniac spirit and principles of the Jacobins. He came under the anathema of the National Assembly, and a detachment of troops under the command of La Combe, Michel, and Salicetti, sailed for Corsica, to remove him from office. Napoleon, who had been on furlough for several months under the maternal roof, was quietly enjoying his attic, which he had furnished for solitary study, when the landing of the invading force startled the island from the repose of Paoli's peaceful reign to the wild commotion of civil war. He refused the Italian's repeated and complimentary proposals to join his standard and strike for independence, and offered his aid to Salicetti.

But his unreserved hatred of the Jacobin excesses exposed him to the suspicion and dislike of that officer, who seems to have been of the Machiavellian school, and Napoleon was arrested, taken to Paris, and triumphantly acquitted. Meanwhile, instigated by the venerable chief Paoli, the people declared against the sanguinary republic. Ajaccio was the only town that had refused, at the command of Paoli, to lower the tricolor. Paoli and his followers, in 1793, marched on

Ajaccio; the three Bonaparte brothers were absent at this critical time; but the heroic Letitia was fully equal to the task of providing for the safety of herself and children. She despatched messengers to Joseph and Napoleon by sea and land; and gave notice that they would soon arrive in the port with the representatives of the people. She thus succeeded in paralyzing the partisans of Paoli in the town.

While waiting for the French fleet, Signora Letitia was on the point of falling into the hands of her enemies. Roused suddenly at midnight, she found her chamber filled with armed mountaineers. She at first thought herself surprised by the partisans of Paoli; but by the light of a torch she saw the countenance of the chief, and felt reassured. It was Costa of Bastelica, the most devoted of the partisans of France. "Quick, make haste, Signora Letitia," he exclaimed; "Paoli's men are close on us. There is not a moment to lose; but I am here with my men. We will serve you or perish."

Bastelica, one of the most populous villages of Corsica, lies at the foot of Monte d'Oro. Its inhabitants are renowned for their courage and loyalty. One of the villagers had encountered a numerous body of the followers of Paoli descending on Ajaccio. He had learned that this troop had orders to take all the Bonaparte family, dead or alive. He returned to the village and roused their friends, who to the number of three hundred, armed, and preceded their enemies by a forced march to Ajaccio. Signora Letitia and her children rose from their beds, and in the center of the column left the town in silence, the inhabitants being still asleep. They penetrated the deepest recesses of the mountains, and at daybreak halted in a forest in sight of the sea. Several times the fugitives heard,

from their encampment, the troops of the enemy in the neighboring valley, but they escaped the risk of an encounter. The same day the flames rising in dense columns from the town, attracted attention. "That is your house now burning," said one of her friends to Letitia. "Ah! never mind," she replied, "we will build it up again much better. *Vive la France!*" After two nights' march, the fugitives descried a French frigate. Letitia took leave of her brave defenders, and joined Joseph and Napoleon, who were on board the vessel at Calvi with the French deputies who had been sent on a mission to Corsica. The frigate turned her prow toward Marseilles, where she landed the family of exiles, destitute of resources, but in health and full of courage.

The Revolution was now "glutting the public with seas of blood." The murder of the king had aroused the monarchs of Europe in defense of royal honor, and united them in the common cause of hostility to the Republican movement. In France herself, there had come a reaction, and Marseilles led in the rebellion against the Jacobins; Lyons and other cities followed. At Toulon, whose citizens for the most part sympathized with the monarchists, were gathered many thousands of fugitives to find protection in the stronghold of disaffection, under the expected shadow of the British and Spanish fleets, riding outside of the harbor. The invitation to garrison the city was immediately accepted, and the twenty-five ships of the line with nearly as many frigates, entered the bay, and prepared, with the munitions of war on board, to fortify the town. This was no timid show of opposition to the leaders of the Revolution, and startled amid the madness of epidemic terror and conflicting passions, they sent forward two armies, to besiege and capture

Toulon. Cartaux, a self-conceited officer, who exchanged the painter's easel for the sword, commanded the expedition.

Accompanying the regular force, were prominent men, among whom was the younger Robespierre, sent out to watch the movements of the army and report to the central government.

These representatives of the people only embarrassed the inefficient commander, and after protracted delay and repeated disasters, which consumed three months, Napoleon, with the commission to assume the command of the artillery, arrived on the field of action. Whether any other influence than his general character as cadet, and brief experience in the regiment *Le Fère*, had set aside objection on the ground of his youth, and secured the promotion, is unknown. He saw at a glance the causes of failure. The batteries were too remote for more than a partial effect, and the whole maneuvering without precision, and concentration of force upon the undisturbed ranks of the enemy. The allies had strengthened the fortress called Little Gibraltar, the main defense of the harbor and town. It received the name from its supposed impregnability. Cartaux looked with jealous contempt upon the Corsican, and shining in the profusion of official decorations, gave him to understand that he was not needed, but might share in the glory of the enterprise. The vain chief was superseded by Doppet, a physician, and greater coward than himself. Next came General Dugommier, a man of energy and intelligence, who entered at once into Napoleon's comprehensive and decisive plans. Subordinate officers were chosen by Bonaparte, and his train, of two hundred guns, prepared for assault. His design was simple and perfect in outline. To the interference of the deputies, on espionage, who suggested