

CHAPTER II.

Napoleon is appointed to the chief command.—His youth.—Leaves Paris for Nice.—Visits his mother.—The contending armies.—The character of Napoleon.—His new tactics.—His address to the soldiers.—The objects of the campaign.—The route of passing the Alps.—The conflict.—The victory.—The pursuit of the Austrians.—Reaches Cherasco, near Turin.—Dictates terms of peace to the king of Sardinia.—Again addresses the army.—His knowledge of men.—Morals.—Crosses the Po.—Battle of Lodi.—Napoleon at Milan.—Letter to Joseph.—Treaty with the dukes of Parma and Modena.—Address to the army.—Jealousy of the Directory.—Napoleon pursues the Austrians.—Insurrection in Lombardy.—Treaty with the Vatican.—Wurmzer appointed to the command.—The Austrians advance.—Battle of Lonato.—Napoleon's peril.—Incidents.—Letter to Joseph.—Castiglione.—Retreat of Wurmzer.—Mantua besieged.—Alvinzi sent into Italy.—The battles of Arcola.—Alvinzi routed.—Battle of Rivoli.—Mantua surrenders.—Letter to Josephine.—Napoleon's success.

A FORTNIGHT before his marriage, Napoleon was appointed commander-in-chief of the army of Italy. The quiet in the capital, directed the attention of the government to the condition of the troops. The dissipated general, whose place had been given to Napoleon, left the army, numbering fifty thousand men, destitute, and exposed to a powerful enemy. Cavalry and food were wanting; clothing was insufficient, and the very sinews of war were weakening every day, while the dangers were augmenting. Of the new general, Barras said to the Directory, "Advance this man, or he will advance himself without you." And when one of them remarked, "You are rather young to assume responsibilities so weighty, and to take command of our veteran generals," he replied, "In one year I shall either be old or dead." Three days after the marriage ceremonies, he hastened toward the headquarters of his battalions.

At Marseilles, he stopped to see his mother, for whom he always manifested a noble filial affection. It was a splendid summit of distinction for her son, who had passed the line of minority but five years before; and we may believe that this interview and the adieu, were fraught with maternal tenderness and pride. The Corsican fugitives were already on the grand arena of European revolutions, to which the anxious eyes of the world were turning. A regicide people were forming institutions hostile to the peace and stability of surrounding thrones, and "the kings of the earth took counsel together" against the republic.

There is nothing marvelous in the contest. France, without either political or moral elements of government and growth after the example of our own, awakened the fears of those who undoubtedly believed in the divine right of kings. Nor does the general view affect decisively the question of Napoleon's motives and character, tried by the standard of a pure philanthropy, patriotism, and Christian ethics.

The letters already quoted, and the subsequent history, will prove him to have been ambitious in the highest degree of personal, family, and national glory. Gifted, generous in his impulses, and correct in morals, he identified himself with the destiny of France, with her, and through her to carve a way to the most dazzling eminence of renown from which youthful or maturest footsteps ever sent down their echoes to applauding millions.

Such was Napoleon when he arrived at Nice. Rampon, one of the officers, volunteered some words of counsel. He resented the impertinence with his own matchless expression of superiority, adding with spirit, "Gentlemen, the art of war is in its infancy. The time has passed in which enemies are mutually to

appoint the place of combat, advance, hat in hand, and say, '*Gentlemen, will you have the goodness to fire?*' We must cut the enemy in pieces, precipitate ourselves like a torrent upon their battalions, and grind them to powder. Experienced generals conduct the troops opposed to us! So much the better—so much the better. It is not their experience which will avail them against me. Mark my words, they will soon burn their books on tactics, and know not what to do. Yes, gentlemen! the first onset of the Italian army will give birth to a new epoch in military affairs. As for us, we must hurl ourselves on the foe like a thunderbolt, and smite like it. Disconcerted by our tactics, and not daring to put them into execution, they will fly before us as the shades of night before the uprising sun." It was this sublimely bold utterance, which drew from Augereau the remark, "We have here a man who will cut out some work for government, I think."

His first address to the army was brief but effective, thrilling upon their weary hearts like unearthly music. "Soldiers," said he, "you are hungry and naked; the republic owes you much, but she has not the means to pay her debts. I am come to lead you into the most fertile plains the sun beholds. Rich provinces, opulent towns, all shall be at your disposal. Soldiers! with such a prospect before you, can you fail in courage and constancy?"

There was a wonderful breadth of thought—a comprehensive insight into military affairs, in the tactics of this officer, which astonished the veterans in command who surrounded him. Napoleon saw at a glance, that his troops with the cumbrous, measured modes of warfare, to which the outnumbering, disciplined armies of Europe adhered, would have a faint prospect

of great success. Abandoning all the embarrassing comforts of the campaign—depending for shelter and stores on the conquered territory; his policy was to move down like the apparently lawless, and unheralded tornado, upon his enemies. The plan was original, daring, and magnificent in outline and aim. He meant to make the most of a demoniac system, concerning which he said, “War is the science of barbarians; as he who has the heaviest battalions will conquer.”

“The objects of the approaching expedition were three: first, to compel the King of Sardinia, who had already lost Savoy and Nice, but still maintained a powerful army on the frontiers of Piedmont, to abandon the alliance of Austria; secondly, to compel Austria, by a bold invasion of her rich Italian provinces, to make such exertions in that quarter as might weaken those armies which had so long hovered on the French frontier of the Rhine; and, if possible, to stir up the Italian subjects of that crown to adopt the revolutionary system and emancipate themselves forever from its yoke. The third object, though more distant, was not less important. The Directory had taken umbrage against the Roman Church, regarding it as the secret support of royalism in France; and to reduce the Vatican into insignificance, or at least force it to submission and quiescence, appeared indispensable to the internal tranquillity of the French nation.”

The Austrian General Beaulieu, anticipating the designs of Napoleon on Italy, arranged his immense force to cover Genoa, and guard the Alpine passes. He took a position at Voltri, ten miles from Genoa; D'Argenteau was at Monte Notte, a summit further west; while the Sardinian troops commanded by Colli, were stationed at Ceva, completing the right wing of the allied armies, and presenting a threatening barrier

of disciplined soldiers, more formidable than the frowning Alps to the advance of the French. To oppose and rout this overwhelming force, Napoleon must rely upon the untried power of his novel plan of attack, of which his enemy had no intimation. To cross the Alps, his design was also his own. Instead of attempting any of the usual paths over the fearful summits, he had decided to march along the slope between the precipitous ranges and the Mediterranean Sea, where the Alps sink into the depression which divides them from the Apennines. Toward this point, both armies mustered their strength, and there the inferior, weakened regiments of the Directory, were to encounter the splendid columns of the Austrian commander.

April 11th, 1796, through a pelting storm and the yielding soil, he moved with incredible rapidity toward Monte Notte, the strong center of the entire army. When he gained the heights, he beheld before him the encampment and the valley, where soon the die would be cast; his first great victory won, or his hopes quenched in blood. The pause was brief; the order to fall on the foe was given, and the smoke of bloody conflict rolled upward from the plain. D'Argenteau finding himself surrounded, was compelled to retreat, leaving three thousand dead and wounded on the field. The new method of attack was no longer an experiment: and Bonaparte was a conqueror, and the terror of Europe's select battalions.

The Austrians fled to Dego; the Sardinian wing fell back to Millesimo; and D'Argenteau endeavored to rally his disheartened detachments, and form again in order of battle. The next day, before the expected reinforcements from Lombardy could arrive to strengthen the allies, who hoped in their new position to save Milan

and Turin, Napoleon marched upon the Austrian line. Angereau was sent toward Millesimo, Massena to Deigo, and Laharpe turned the left flank of the commander-in-chief. Each did his work well. At Deigo, where Beaulieu had intrenched himself, the Austrians were defeated, the general driven from his position, and three thousand prisoners taken. The Sardinians at Millesimo surrendered, numbering fifteen hundred; a disaster which reduced them to a wreck, and wiped out their name from the list of boastful allies. Napoleon now moved on like an Alpine avalanche toward Turin the capital of Sardinia. On the heights of Zeamolo, he beheld, as did the crusaders the city of David from encircling hills, the glorious prize for which he fought—the verdant river-veined and fertile plains of lovely Italy. His troops poured down upon the promised land with delight. At Ceva he met the foe, eight thousand strong, and after an indecisive conflict, overtook them again near the torrent Carsuglia; where a desperate battle was fought, and the bridge crossed. Napoleon marched on to Cherasco, within ten miles of Turin, where he encamped, to dictate the terms on which the King could hold his throne, and the government in form and name continue. He demanded, before measures for an armistice were considered, the surrender of Coni, Tortona, and Alexandria, fortresses which bore the name of “the keys of the Alps.” When he discovered hesitation, he sternly added, “Listen to the laws I impose upon you in the name of my country, and obey, or to-morrow my batteries are erected, and Turin is in flames.” Thus all of consequence but Turin itself was in his hands, and an ambassador on his way to Paris, to conclude the treaty with the kingdom, leaving his way unobstructed to carry on the war against Austria. In less than a month the young Corsican had conquered in three grand battles,

killed, wounded and captured *twenty-five thousand* men; taken eighty guns, and twenty-one standards; and that too with an army inferior in numbers, and in all the appendages of the battle-field, and with comparatively an insignificant loss of men. Never before was such dazzling and sanguinary conflict witnessed, and the wisdom of the wise in the science of human slaughter so utterly confounded.

Prepared to move forward to his greater enterprise, he cast his eye upward to the majestic peaks that glittered in the sunlight, and exclaimed: “Hannibal forced the Alps, and we have turned them.” He then addressed, with stirring eloquence, his troops:

“Hitherto you have been fighting for barren rocks, memorable for your valor, but useless to your country; but now your exploits equal those of the armies of Holland and the Rhine. You were utterly destitute and you have supplied all your wants. You have gained battles without cannon, passed rivers without bridges, performed forced marches without shoes, bivouacked without strong liquors, and often without bread. None but republican phalanxes, soldiers of liberty, could have endured such things. Thanks for your perseverance! But, soldiers, you have done nothing—for there remains much to do. Milan is not yet yours. The ashes of the conquerors of Tarquin are still trampled by the assassins of Basseville.”

Napoleon’s consummate knowledge of human nature was visible in his every act. He knew how to reach the soldier’s sympathy and inflame his enthusiasm. His system of warfare, and his modest style of announcing his successes, were all marked with the same profound insight of the secret of power over the minds of men. This marvelous quality of character he expressed, when he remarked: “My extreme youth, when I took com-

16339

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mand of the army of Italy, rendered it necessary that I should evince great reserve of manners, and the utmost severity of morals. This was indispensable to enable me to sustain authority over men so greatly my superiors in age and experience. I pursued a line of conduct in the highest degree irreproachable and exemplary. In spotless morality I was a Cato, and must have appeared such to all. I was a philosopher and a sage. My supremacy could be retained only by proving myself a better man than any other man in the army. Had I yielded to human weaknesses, I should have lost my power."

While the motive revealed cannot claim the name of virtue, the morality it secured shed luster upon his name. His position at this period in his history was sublime, and his fame the admiration of the world.

The kingdom of Sardinia, comprised Nice, Savoy, Montferrat, and Piedmont; of the latter Napoleon was now the undisputed master. He sent messages of affection to Josephine, who in her unselfish devotion rejoiced more than himself, in every conquest of his battalions, and pressed on to overtake Beaulieu, who had retreated behind the Po. By artful maneuvering he made the Austrian general believe that he designed to cross the river at Valenza, while under cover of night he marched, with unequalled rapidity, eighty miles down the stream in thirty-six hours, sweeping with him every boat upon its banks. On the 7th of May, he crossed in ferry boats, without the loss of a single man, in the face of two reconnoitering squadrons of the enemy, who gazed with bewildering amazement on the scene, and he was on the plains of Lombardy. Beaulieu, upon learning the successful stratagem, marched forward, hoping to give the French battle with the Po behind them, to make the advantage to him as great as pos-

sible. Napoleon anticipated him in this design, and pressed on to Fombio, where the advanced divisions of the two armies met on the 8th of May. The Austrians occupied the steeples, the windows, and roofs of the houses, and poured down their fire on the enemy crowding the streets. Before the impetuous charge of the French, a third of their men fell, and the remainder fled; leaving their cannon behind. On the banks of the Adda, Beaulieu drew up his army, defending every passage, especially the bridge of Lodi, across which he justly thought Napoleon would attempt to force a transit.

The wooden bridge of Lodi formed the scene of one of the most celebrated actions of the war. It was a great neglect in Beaulieu to leave it standing when he removed his headquarters to the east bank of the Adda; his outposts were driven rapidly through the old straggling town of Lodi on the 10th; and the French, sheltering themselves behind the walls and the houses, lay ready to attempt the passage of the bridge. Beaulieu had placed a battery of thirty cannon so as to sweep it completely; and the enterprise of storming it in the face of this artillery, and of a whole army drawn up behind, is one of the most daring on record.

Bonaparte's first care was to place as many guns as he could get in order, in direct opposition to this Austrian battery. A furious cannonade on his side of the river also now commenced. The general himself appeared in the midst of the fire, pointing with his own hand two guns in such a manner as to cut off the Austrians from the only path by which they could have advanced to undermine the bridge; and it was on this occasion that the soldiery, delighted with his dauntless exposure of his person, conferred on him his honorary nickname of *The Little Corporal*. In the mean

time, he had sent General Beaumont and the cavalry to attempt the passage of the river, by a distant ford (which they had much difficulty in effecting), and awaited with anxiety the moment when they should appear on the enemy's flank. When that took place, Beaulieu's line, of course, showed some confusion, and Napoleon instantly gave the word. A column of grenadiers, whom he had kept ready drawn up close to the bridge, but under shelter of the houses, were in a moment wheeled to the left, and their leading files placed on the bridge. They rushed on, shouting *Vive la République!* but the storm of grape-shot for a moment checked them. Bonaparte, Lannes, Berthier, and Lallemand, hurried to the front, and rallied and cheered the men. The column dashed across the bridge in despite of the tempest of fire that thinned them. The brave Lannes was the first who reached the other side, Napoleon himself the second. The Austrian artillery-men were bayoneted at their guns, ere the other troops whom Beaulieu had removed too far back, in his anxiety to avoid the French battery, could come to their assistance. Beaumont pressed gallantly with his horse upon the flank, and Napoleon's infantry formed rapidly as they passed the bridge, and charged on the instant; the Austrian line became involved in inextricable confusion, broke up and fled. The slaughter on their side was great; on the French side, there fell only two hundred men. With such rapidity, and consequently with so little loss, did Bonaparte execute this dazzling adventure—"the terrible passage," as he himself called it, "of the bridge of Lodi."

It was, indeed, terrible to the enemy. It deprived them of another excellent line of defense; and raised the enthusiasm of the French soldiery to a pitch of irresistible daring. Beaulieu, nevertheless, contrived to

withdraw his troops in much better style than Bonaparte had anticipated. He gathered the scattered fragments of his force together, and soon threw the line of the Mincio, a tributary of the Po, between himself and his enemy. The great object, however, had been attained: and no obstacle remained between the victorious invader and the rich and noble capital of Lombardy. The garrison of Pizzighitone, seeing themselves effectually cut off from the Austrian army, capitulated. The French cavalry pursued Beaulieu as far as Cremona, which town they seized; and Bonaparte himself prepared to march upon Milan. It was after one of these affairs that an old Hungarian officer was brought prisoner to Bonaparte, who entered into conversation with him, and among other matters questioned him "what he thought of the state of the war?" "Nothing," replied the old gentleman, who did not know he was addressing the general-in-chief, "nothing can be worse. Here is a young man who knows absolutely nothing of the rules of war; to-day he is in our rear, to-morrow on our flank, next day again in our front. Such violations of the principles of the art of war are intolerable!"

The charming and fruitful plains of Lombardy, which, conquered by Austria, were ruled by the Archduke Ferdinand, was now in the hands of Napoleon. While the Austrians withdrew into the Tyrol, Ferdinand and the duchess, sadly retired from the palace of Milan. In the very ranks of the retreating troops, the revolutionary party secretly existing here, as well as elsewhere beneath the Austrian flag, displayed openly the tri-color cockade, and the municipal authorities waited with a cordial welcome upon the victorious Corsican. A month after the decisive blow at Monte Notte, and four days after the bloody affair at Lodi,

Napoleon entered the capital of the Lombard kings in complete and splendid triumph. He there wrote the following brief note to his brother, in which both a royal dictation in family plans, and love for Josephine are disclosed :

NAPOLEON TO JOSEPH.

"MILAN, May 14,* 1796.

"All goes on well. Pray arrange Paulette's affairs. I do not intend Fréron to marry her. Tell her so, and let him know it too.

"We are masters of all Lombardy.

"Adieu, my dear Joseph ; give me news of my wife. I hear that she is ill, which wrings my heart."

Of the Italian powers, Naples alone remained hostile and unconquered.

Napoleon's intention to humble Rome, however, he did not conceal, whenever the provocation or opportunity came. Persuaded that all the princes of the invaded peninsula were opposed to his progress, he resolved to make thorough work of the conquest, and regard those who were not with him as against him. The Dukes of Parma and Modena, possessed of great wealth but with small defense, submitted to his terms of tribute money, and a contribution of fine old paintings for the galleries of Paris. He then issued another thrilling address to his army, already flushed with victory, and impatient to follow their deified general.

"Soldiers ! you have descended like a torrent from the Apennines. You have overwhelmed everything which opposed your progress. Piedmont is delivered from the tyranny of Austria, Milan is in your hands,

* This date is erroneous. Napoleon entered Milan the 26th Floreal, or the 15th of May.—Tr.

and the republican standards wave over the whole of Lombardy. The Dukes of Parma and Modena owe their existence to your generosity. The army which menaced you with so much pride, can no longer find a barrier to protect itself against your arms. The Po, the Ticino, the Adda, have not been able to stop you a single day. These boasted bulwarks of Italy have proved as nugatory as the Alps. Such a career of success has carried joy into the bosom of your country. Fêtes in honor of your victories have been ordered in all the communes of the Republic. There your parents, your wives, your sisters, your lovers, rejoice in your achievements, and boast with pride that you belong to them. Yes, soldiers ! you have indeed done much, but much remains still to be done. Shall posterity say that we knew how to conquer, but knew not how to improve victory ? Shall we find a Capua in Lombardy ? We have forced marches to make, enemies to subdue, laurels to gather, injuries to revenge. Let those who have whetted the daggers of civil war in France, who have assassinated our ministers, who have burned our ships at Toulon, let these tremble—the hour of vengeance has struck ! But let not the people be alarmed. We are the friends of the people everywhere ; particularly of the Brutuses, the Scipios, and the great men we have taken for our models. To re-establish the capitol ; to replace the statues of the heroes who rendered it illustrious ; to rouse the Romans, stupefied by centuries of slavery—such will be the fruit of your victories. They will form an epoch with posterity. To you will pertain the immortal glory of changing the face of the finest portion of Europe. The French people, free and respected by the whole world, will give to Europe a glorious peace. You will then return to your homes, and your fellow-citizens will say, pointing

to you, 'He belonged to the army of Italy!'" What chord of a soldier's heart was not touched in this burst of eloquence. Exultation over the past success, the admiring gratitude of country and friends, the glory and revenge of the future, were all concentrated in the brilliant harangue. Then, while robbing the conquered of treasures to support the army, and pictures as *souvenirs* of his conquest, he persuaded them that he was the devoted friend of the common people.

Upon the sixth day after his magnificent entrance into the palace of Ferdinand, Napoleon left its splendid apartments, in pursuit of the Austrian general.

A detachment remained to blockade the citadel, which had not surrendered to the conqueror. Beau-lieu was intrenched on the banks of the Mincio, with Mantua, "the citadel of Italy," on the left, and Peschiera, a Venetian fortress he had taken, on the right. The Lago di Garda spread its waters toward the Tyrolese Alps, extending the area of defense, and keeping unobstructed a channel of communication with Vienna. To this stronghold of a disciplined army, Napoleon moved rapidly, expecting nothing less than a complete defeat of his equally sanguine foe. At this juncture, the Directory were in the trepidation of fear at the spreading glory and commanding influence of their youthful hero, and they decided at once to check his royal march to renown. Their plan was to divide the command, and Kellerman, a distinguished and veteran officer, was appointed his associate, to pursue the Austrians, leaving Napoleon to march upon the Papal dominions. But his reply was characteristic of the man. He immediately tendered his resignation, and added briefly his reason: "One-half of the army of Italy cannot suffice to finish the matter with the Austrians. It is only by keeping my force entire that

I have been able to gain so many battles, and to be now in Milan. You had better have one bad general than two good ones."

The Directory were vanquished, and left the commander-in-chief in undisputed direction of the troops—the last effort to restrain or guide his unexampled career. And here another unexpected delay occurred in the progress toward Mantua. An insurrection had arisen in Lombardy, fanned by the heavy tribute demanded by the French, and the irreverent disregard of their churches and clergy. A rumored advance of Austrian levies gave strength to the rebellion, until thirty thousand men were ready for conflict. They drove the French garrison before them at Pavia. Then commenced the tragical policy of Napoleon, indicated in his slaughter of the sections in Paris. Lannes was ordered to chastise the insurgents by burning Benaseo, and putting the inhabitants to the sword, while Napoleon marched on Pavia, swept the gates like cobwebs from his path, and executed the leaders of the insurrection.

At Lugo, where a squadron of the republican army had been defeated, he massacred without pity the entire population. The remedy was effective—the rebellion was drowned in blood. It is idle to apologize for the lawless destruction of life, on the ground of necessary chastisement. For there can be no excuse for so murderous and exterminating carnage, when the people rose to defend their invaded soil. One such scene in the history of Washington would have darkened his fair fame forever. The truth is, Napoleon valued human life no more in questions of conquest and glory, than he did the fruitage of the plains over which he swept, like conflagration and pestilence conspiring to destroy both the proprietors of the soil and its vegetation.

The versatility of Napoleon's imperial genius, was