

# NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

## Study of His Childhood and Strong Characteristics.

### BOYHOOD OF THE FUTURE EMPEROR.

Abrupt and Quarrelsome in Disposition. With No Regard For Neatness of Attire. Lacked the Scholastic Trait—His First Entry Into France.

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II.—BOYHOOD.

Napoleon may be said to have had a threefold life. He was an Italian by descent, a Corsican by variation, and a Frenchman by nationality. He was the last by a close contingency; for Corsica had only become French a few months before his birth. We may here glance briefly at the aspect of the world at the date of his apparition.

The Bourbon monarchy of France was in its hectic heyday—knowing little, and fearing nothing. Its wisest organ was the minister of Foreign Affairs, the great Choiseul. Louis XV. was in the forty-sixth year of his reign. Italy consisted of distracted principalities, over which the papal power still extended its scepter in spectral majesty. Clement XIV. had reached the third month of his pontificate. The Hapsburg Joseph II. was in the fourth year of that imperial rule which had now become a shadow and illusion on the disk of time. Great Britain, gaining rapidly by conquest on foreign shores, had for ruler George III., then in the thirty-first year of his age.

In America the rebels of New England had been outlawed by Parliament for their "rash and hasty proceeding" against the tax on tea. Only a few miles from the birthplace in the house of Carlo Bonaparte was stationed a Provencal lieutenant with his regiment of Lorraine, and his name was Mirabeau!

Letitia di Bonaparte was not quite nineteen years of age when her war-god was born. Incidents in the first years of the Napoleonic childhood there are none recorded. We are left to himself and to his schoolmate Bourienne for our knowledge of the earliest characteristics and events of his life.

The Corsican had a prodigious memory, and it reached back well toward his infancy. When in after years he spoke of himself—he was much given to doing—he generally used exaggeration; but we may not doubt that there was always a vein of sterling truth under-



CARLO BONAPARTE, FATHER OF NAPOLEON, running his dramatic recitals. We know indeed, out of the nature of the case, that his representations of his own childhood-character were in the main correct.

The young Bonaparte was from a babe abrupt and quarrelsome. His willfulness was extreme. The likelihood is that he never once in his life willingly obeyed anybody! Near his death, at Longwood, he declared that he was never afraid. His child-passion was frequently excited against Joseph, over whom he exercised a censorious sway from the time when they toddled together in the birth-room or fought in the yard. He appears to have loved his mother, and to have obeyed her in a morose and mathematical way; but in his last talk he indicates that his conduct as a child toward the mother was rather prudential than affectionate. He bears witness that the Ramolino lioness was tender in the treatment of him, as well as severe and just.

To their fourth child, Carlo Bonaparte and his wife gave the name of Napoleon. At the first it was Napoleone. In this form the possessor retained it until, flaring up in Paris in the character of a young Jacobin, he threw away the Italian and aristocratic fictions in his name, to become plain, republican NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

The first teaching of the child Bonaparte was given by his mother. Then he was sent, in his sixth year, to a child's school kept by a woman. He went from the parental threshold in that same arbitrary and belligerent mood which characterized him ever. He fought with his schoolmates, among whom he appeared with no sign of neatness in his clothing, and nothing debonaire in his manner.

At this time, beside his parents, he had two important relatives. One of these was Lucien Bonaparte, brother of his grandfather Joseph; and the other was Joseph Fesch, afterwards the Cardinal Fesch, half-brother of his mother. The latter was a studious lad of twelve, who took an interest in his sister's son; and the former had wealth and influence in the island, both of which he was willing to bestow on the Bonaparte schoolboy. Young Fesch aided him with his lessons, and exercised a conservative influence on his temper. How little might it be foreseen that the younger of these twain, with his surly look and long hair and stockings down over his shoes in the dust of the playground, should one day, from an imperial palace in the most splendid city in the world, despatch his elder playmate as ambassador to the Pope of Rome!

What were the civil and social influences around the schoolhouse of Bonaparte? The sentiments of that place are among the most potent and enduring forces of life. The child nature imbibes unconsciously the prevailing principles of the hour; and the character is forming while the first hesitant words are conned from the primer. The boy Napoleon had around his schoolroom—as around his cradle—an agitated atmosphere. It was banked with the reeking clouds of revolution. There was lightning on the rim, and blood on the fringes.

The majority of the Corsicans had accepted the French dominations. Some still remembered Genoa with affection; and many sighed for independence. Among the latter were the Bonapartes. The feeling of regret for the lost cause began to wane about the time that Napoleon was sent to school; but there was still in his heart a drop of inherited bitterness on account of the French conquest. He looked back angrily at the terrible conditions surrounding him in his childhood. As late as his twentieth year he broke out in passion. "I was born," said he, "while my country was dying. Thirty thousand French, vomited on our shores, drowning the throne of liberty in waves of blood—such was the horrid sight which first met my view. The cries of the dying, the groans of the oppressed, tears of despair, surrounded my cradle at my birth." The utterance shows how hardly the future emperor of the French himself in youth became a Frenchman.

When, from the sixth to the ninth year of his age, the boy Bonaparte attended school in his native town, three lines radiated before his feet. One of these was dim and clouded, but glorified with patches of extreme light. It was the way into the kingdom of that New Philosophy which was just then revealing itself with such brilliancy in France. A second and well trod way led straight to the Church. Rome was great and honorable. Her rewards of diligent ambition were real and certain. The young aspirant who entered the colleges might well expect emolument and reputation. The third path led dangerously to the military life. None might at that time discern the coming upheaval of society, with its concomitant reign of the sword. But the agitations of the epoch were sufficient to encourage war, and to offer a measure of inducement to follow in the path of military glory.

The taciturn schoolboy of Ajaccio had these three open ways before him. From the first, he was precluded by the dispositions of his family, intensified in himself. He never had the scholastic trait. His abilities as a pupil, and afterwards as a military cadet, showed nothing of the philosophic. Indeed he conceived—how early in boyhood we know not—a prejudice against philosophy and the philosophers as well. As for the Church, he had an inbred admiration for Rome; but the kind of life offered in the priesthood was without attractions for him personally. He was willing that Joseph and other of his friends should become priests and bishops; but not himself. Neither the scholar's gown nor the priest's surplice offered the slightest attraction to his imagination.

The condition of the Bonaparte family about the years 1776-78 was critical. Carlo, the father, had given an interested adherence to the French. He had his hopes from the annexation. He would keep his titles and recover the properties formerly belonging to the family. The Bonaparte estates in Corsica had been mostly lost. Some had been confiscated by the Genoese party and converted into Jesuit schools. The recent revolution had reduced Carlo's means almost to naught. He was himself of no reputation as an economist. His family had rapidly multiplied. Two children died in infancy between the birth of Napoleon and that of Lucien, in 1775. The family was brought almost to penury.

Carlo de Bonaparte could not get back his properties. The privilege of writing his name with a de did not compensate for his losses. He struggled with adversity, and sought the aid of influential friends. Among these the most available was General Marbeuf. The latter in 1776 appealed on behalf of the Corsican friends to the authorities in Paris for the privilege of educating the Bonaparte boys in France at the expense of the royal treasury. This thing might be done—provided the applicants should be under ten years of age, and be able to show four strains of noble blood in their veins! In the case of the boys Bonaparte, this could not be proved; and affairs in the homestead went from bad to worse.

At this juncture history, rather than man, came to the rescue. France was on the verge of bankruptcy. One finance minister after another was appointed, and one financial scheme after another exploded in the hands of the inventors. It became necessary to call together, at Versailles, a council of the nobles. Carlo de Bonaparte was chosen a representative from Corsica. In going to perform his duty at the French capital, he took with him, to be distributed en route, his two sons, Joseph and Napoleon; also, the boys' half uncle, Joseph Fesch; also, a cousin of Letitia, the mother. As for Fesch, he was to be left as a student at Aix. The cousin had been appointed to an office in the church at Autun; and at that place the distracted father determined to drop his two sons at school.

This was in the year 1778. The company set out by way of Florence, Genoa, Marseilles, Lyons. The youngest of the company was a sad-faced, big-eyed boy, in such apparel as could be furnished in the house of an impecunious nobleman. The boy's head was bent forward as he walked. His foot now for the first time touched the continent. He was in his tenth year. He muttered broken ejaculations to his companions. It was Napoleon Bonaparte on his way to Autun—and the world.

JOHN CLARK RIDPATH.

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# THE SUNDAY SCHOOLSOME STYLISH NOTIONS

## LESSON IX, FIRST QUARTER, INTEAN IMPORTANT SUBJECT FOR BOTH NATIONAL SERIES, MARCH 3. OLD AND YOUNG.

Text of the Lesson, John xi, 30-45—Merry Verses, 23-36—Golden Text, John xi, 35—Commentary by the Rev. D. I. Stearns.

30. It is probable that all the events recorded in Luke x, 17, to xviii, 43, and also this, and that Jesus is now on His way to Jerusalem, shortly before the last passover. While He was beyond Jordan Lazarus took sick, and the sisters sent Him word but instead of hastening to him He tarried two days in the same place, and He still Lazarus was dead and buried did He set forth to a wake him out of sleep (ver. 11). When Martha heard that He was coming, she went forth out of the town to meet Him, and afterward calling Mary secretly she, too, went forth out of the town Jesus tarrying where Martha had been.

31. When the people in the house who came together to comfort Martha and Mary saw Mary go forth hastily, not knowing that her sister had called her to weep there. They must have been poor comforters, for they knew not the comfort of I Thess. iv, 10-18. How few seem to know it even now, for even at the funeral of a believer we have often heard a position of the corpse, but seldom these words: "The Lord means death, Martha and Mary, wherein the comfort lies, which assure us that one hour our departed loved ones will be with Christ may join us, and together we meet the Lord in the air."

32. Mary, coming where Jesus was, fell down at His feet, uttering the very same words which her sister had used (verse 21) against one another; either of the same Now if, as some teach us, the coming material as the Lord means death, Martha and Mary, should have said, Lord, we are so glad you can; when our brother died, but they say that if He had come Lazarus would not have died.

33. He would not be troubled without cause, and when we hear Him twice groan now. They come in in spirit in this lesson (see verse 38) very we may be sure the cause was very great. What could it be? His dear friends whom He loved were in deep sorrow, and He felt sorry for them.

34. His inquiry, "Where have ye laid him?" confirms us in the thought that friend was made was the work of death upon this dear friend whom Jesus loved (verse 3), which was in part at least the cause of the Saviour's groaning, and while He knew that yet ribbons have a He would surely raise up and restore Lazarus to his sisters yet He felt deeply the work of the enemy and saw it in all its terrors and horrors from Abel to the very end.

35. "Jesus wept." Shortest verse in the Bible, but who can tell its breadth and length and depth and height? On three different occasions Jesus is said to have wept. See Luke xix, 41; Heb. v, 7. In the former two we see His sorrow for those who, by their unbelief, were bringing untold sufferings upon themselves, but into the meaning of the latter we cannot pretend to enter.

36. "Behold how He loved him." God is love, and all the love of Jesus was the manifestation of the love of God. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him" (I John iv, 9).

37. They have not forgotten the unheard-of wonder of the opened eyes of the man who was born blind. Possibly they had heard of the two resurrections in the north country, of the little girl and the widow's son. Like Martha and Mary, they felt that, if Jesus had only been present, He might have prevented Lazarus from dying, but it is too late now, for he is dead and buried, and neither of the others had been buried.

38. They are now at the grave, or cave, with a stone upon it, and again He groans within Himself. We are reminded of the words in Rom. viii, 23, "Our groans, also, which have the fruit of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of our body."

39. The stone is between Him and the dead body of His dear friend, and that they can take away. It is ours to take away everything that may be between Jesus and the soul that is dead in sins. No matter who may object, because of the seeming impossibilities of the case, let us get away all the obstacles and bring the sinner face to face with Jesus.

40. The greatest of all hindrances is unbelief. In one place He could because of this do no mighty works, and it is unbelief that both keeps sinners under condemnation and keeps saints from entering into the rest (John iii, 18; Heb. iii, 19). In spite of feelings or circumstances of all that our eyes can see we must believe God. To the man whose little girl had just died, Jesus said, "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark v, 36). In the storm at sea, when it seemed as if the vessel must go down with all on board, and there was nothing to rest upon but the word of the messenger, He said, "I believe God."

41. The stone being taken away, Jesus glorifies His Father by acknowledging Him as the one who was about to work, and He thanks Him beforehand for the answer. Hear Him also thanking the Father in Math. xi, 25; Luke x, 21. He ever made it manifest that the words and works were not His, but those of the Father who sent Him. He manifested to us to believe and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii, 13).

42. He always pleased the Father; the Father always heard Him, because He sought only the Father's will and glory (John vi, 38; viii, 29, 50). It is our privilege to be well pleasing in His sight, and so to abide in Him that we may ask what we will and receive it (Heb. xiii, 21).

43. The same voice that said in the beginning, "Let there be light," that spoke to Israel from out of the mist of the fire on the mount; that spoke and it was done, and it stood fast; that same voice now cries, "Lazarus, come forth!"

44. The mighty word gave life, and suddenly he that had been dead stood in the mouth of the cave alive and well. What a word it was, what a word it is! There is nothing like it on earth. God is in it. The Bible, the word of God, not only was inspired, but is inspired. It is forever settled in heaven, it is true from the beginning, and it shall stand forever (Ps. cxix, 89, 100; Isa. xl, 8).

45. Many will still believe on Jesus when they see real life and liberty in those who bear the name of Jesus, but a mere name to live where there is no real life will never honor Christ nor win people to Him. But as in the context this miracle stirred up the hatred of those who were merely religious without any reality we may be sure that real life will work just that way still.

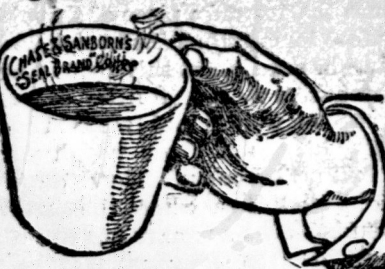
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