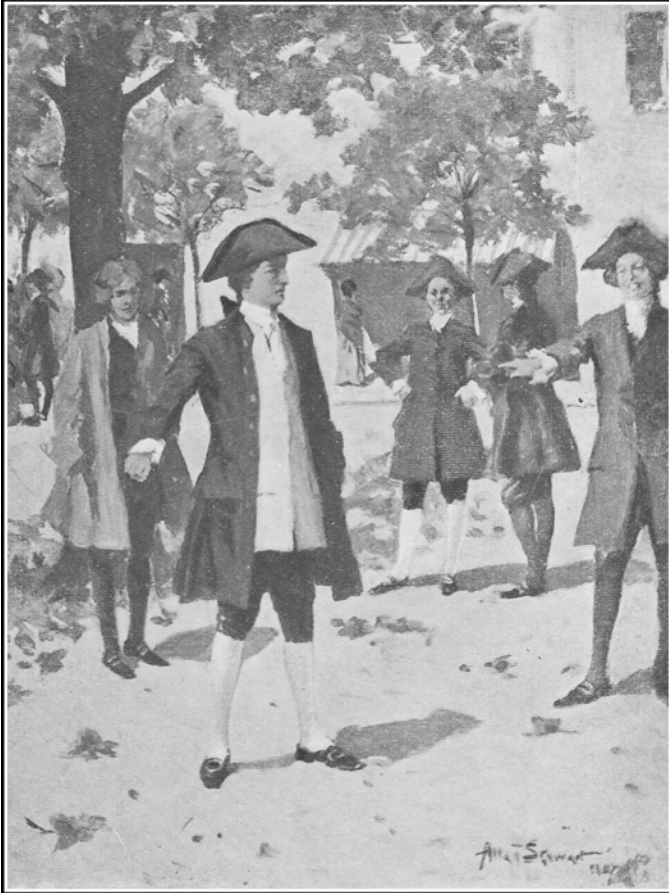


THE STORY OF NAPOLEON



NAPOLEON AS A BOY

THE CHILDREN'S HEROES SERIES

**THE STORY OF
NAPOLEON**

BY

H. E. MARSHALL

***WITH PICTURES
BY ALLAN STEWART***



YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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ISBN-10: 1-59915-214-2

ISBN-13: 978-1-59915-214-1

Yesterday's Classics, LLC
PO Box 3418
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

To

MALCOLM

PREFACE

EACH of us bears about within him a dark, strange room, through the closed doors of which none but himself and God may pass to see and know what lies therein. With some the room is small, and much is left without for all the world to see and know. With some the room is very large, shutting in perchance the whole true man. And when we meet with such an one, and ask ourselves if he be great or little, good or bad, we must, if we be honest, say "I know not, for I cannot understand."

Such was the great Napoleon. The strange dark room he bore within was very large. And though there be many who hold aloft a flaming torch, and cry, "Come, follow me, and I will show to you what lay in that dark place," in smoke and flare the light dies out, the darkness seems yet darker, and we know as little.

So, if you ask me is this Napoleon a true hero, I say, God—who alone has seen and knows what lay in that dark room—God knows.

H.E. MARSHALL.

OXFORD.

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CHAPTER I

NAPOLEON AT SCHOOL

TO the south of Europe there is a sunny blue sea called the Mediterranean.

In this sunny, blue sea about fifty miles from the coast of Italy lies the island of Corsica, a rugged and beautiful little island, full of mountains. Its people are hardy and brave, and, like all mountain peoples, they love liberty. But for hundreds of years the island belonged to the Republic of Genoa. The people hated to be ruled by Genoa, and at last, under a leader called Paoli, they rebelled and fought for freedom—fought indeed so well that they nearly drove the Genoese out. Then the Genoese asked the French to help them, and at last, tired of the struggle, they sold the island to France.

At that the Corsicans were very angry. What right had the Genoese to sell them like cattle to a new master? they asked. So they went on fighting the French, as they had fought the Genoese.

Among those who fought were Charles-Marie Bonaparte and his brave wife, Letizia. Bonaparte was an Italian, but for many years his family had lived in

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Corsica. He was a noble; but in Corsica there was little difference between nobles and shepherds—they were all poor and proud alike. Letizia was young and beautiful, yet she bore all the hardships of war bravely. She followed her husband even to the battle-field. She was often in danger from flying bullets, yet she feared nothing, and thought only of the safety of her husband and the freedom of her country. By mountain paths, steep and narrow; through trackless forests, called in Corsica, “maquis”; over streams where there were no bridges, Letizia followed her husband. She was only a girl, but she had the heart of a hero, and not until the struggle proved hopeless did she give in.

For France was great and Corsica little, and brave though the people were, they were at last forced to yield; their island became part of the French dominion, and their leader Paoli fled over the seas.

And here, in this little isle, almost before the roar of battle had ceased, among a people full of sullen anger and bitterness against their conquerors, one blazing August day in 1769 a little son was born to Charles and Letizia Bonaparte. They gave him the name of Napoleon, a name which he was to make famous all the world over, and for all time to come.

Napoleon had several brothers and sisters, and their mother, having only one servant, had little time to look after the children. So she gave them a big, empty room in which to play. The walls and floor of this room were bare, and there was nothing in it except the children’s toys. Here they were allowed to do as they liked. They scribbled and drew pictures on the

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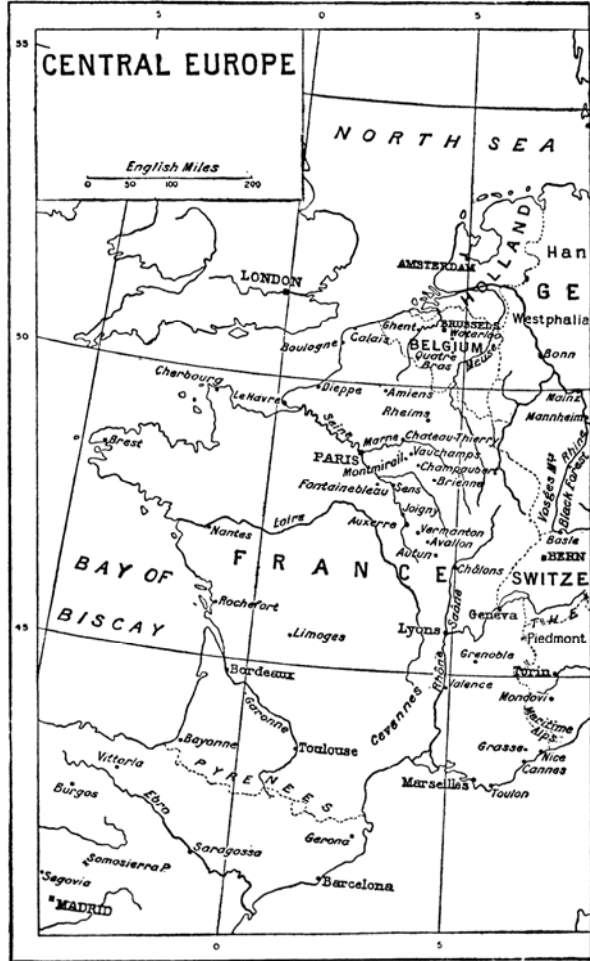
walls, and played at all sorts of games. Napoleon always drew soldiers marching to battle, and he played with nothing but a drum and a wooden sword. He used to get up battles, too, amongst the boys of the neighbourhood. The wars would last for months at a time, during which there would be many fierce fights, surprises, and assaults. Napoleon was always leader, and made the others obey him. He was afraid of no one, and he bit, scratched, and slapped any one, big or little, as he chose. He was often noisy and quarrelsome, and bullied his brothers and sisters, especially Joseph, who was older than he.

But at times, even when he was a very small boy, he would be moody and thoughtful, and would walk about by himself, refusing to speak or play with the others. He was an untidy little boy, not caring in the least how he was dressed. Straight dark hair straggled over his brown face, his stockings hung down over his shoe-tops, and altogether he must have looked a wild little harum-scarum.

When Napoleon was about five years old he was sent to a school for little girls kept by nuns. But he did not stay long there and was soon sent to a boys' school, with his brother Joseph. Here the boys in class were set opposite each other in two rows, each under a large flag. One was the flag of Carthage, the other the flag of Rome, with S.P.Q.R. upon it, which means "Senatus Populusque Romanus." That is Latin for "The Senate and People of Rome."

The boys were arranged like this so that each side might try to learn better than the other, and fight

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and conquer in lessons, as the Romans and Carthaginians fought in war.

As Napoleon was the younger of the two brothers, he was put on the side of Carthage. But he did not like that at all, for in history he knew the Romans had always been the conquerors, and he liked to be on the winning side. So Joseph, who did not mind so much, changed with Napoleon, and allowed him to be a Roman.

Napoleon loved soldiers better than anything else and he longed to be one. Every morning, before he went to school, he was given a piece of white bread. This he used to give to a soldier in exchange for a piece of coarse brown bread. His mother was not very pleased at this. "Why do you give away your good white bread for a piece of brown?" she asked him one day.

"Because," replied Napoleon, "if I am going to be a soldier I must get used to eating soldiers' bread. Besides, I like it."

As he loved soldiers so much, his father and mother decided that he should be one. And one December day a little ship sailed away from Corsica, carrying Charles Bonaparte and his two sons, Joseph and Napoleon, over the sea to France. Napoleon was not yet ten, and Joseph scarcely a year older. He was going to learn to be a priest, and Napoleon to be a soldier.

The boys were sent to school at a town called Autun. With his fellows Joseph soon became a favour-

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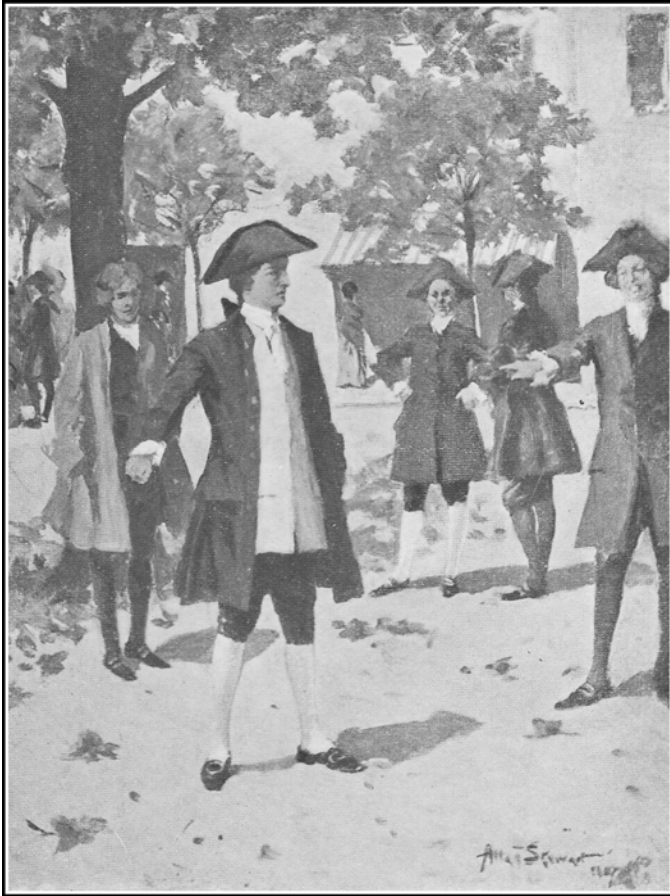
ite. He was a little shy at first, but he was lively and gay, and joined in games with the other boys.

Napoleon, on the other hand, was silent and sad. His dark face looked sulky, and instead of joining in the games, he liked best to go about by himself. So the boys teased him. They called him "cowardly Corsican," and reminded him that his island had been conquered by the French. At first Napoleon paid no attention. Then suddenly, one day, flashing round on his tormentors, he cried, "If the French had been four against one only, they would never have had Corsica: but they were ten to one."

But if Joseph was the greater favourite, Napoleon was far the more clever. He soon learned to read and speak in French. For to the boys French was a foreign language; at home, in Corsica, they spoke Italian. But although Napoleon learned to speak French very well, all his life long he made mistakes in it, especially in writing. He wrote very badly too—to hide his bad spelling, some people say.

The little, sulky, lonely boy did not stay long at Autun. In about three months his father came to take him away to the military school at Brienne. But Joseph was to be left at Autun. The two brothers had never before been parted, and although Napoleon bullied Joseph they were very fond of each other. Now that they were in a strange land, far from their home, among people speaking a strange language, they seemed to love each other more. When they knew that they must part, Joseph burst into tears. But Napoleon tried hard to pretend that he did not care. His dark

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face only looked more sulky than before. But although he tried hard, he could not quite keep back the tears, and one slowly trickled down his cheek.

At first Napoleon was not happy at his new school, even though he was dressed in a uniform and was going to be a soldier. He was dreadfully homesick. He was told that he would have to stay at school for six years, and to a little boy of nine it seemed as if six years would never end.

As Napoleon was shy, moody, and silent, his schoolfellows teased him here too. They nicknamed him "Straw on Nose," because they thought that he held his nose in the air, and that Napoleon sounded like the French words for straw on nose—"la paille au nez." They teased him, also, about his country. "You are a conquered nation, a people of slaves," they said.

But one winter, when Napoleon had been about four years at school, the boys had lessons about the building of ramparts and fortifications. They were taught the names of the different kinds of forts, their uses, and how best to attack and defend them. While these lessons were going on, there came a heavy fall of snow. This gave Napoleon a grand idea. He proposed that they should build a fortress of snow, and attack and defend it like soldiers.

All the boys were delighted with the idea. Napoleon drew out the lines of the fort, and soon every one was hard at work with spade and wheel-barrow, eagerly building under Napoleon's directions.

When the fort was finished, the boys took sides, and fought with snowballs. Napoleon was general, and

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he commanded both sides, giving orders sometimes to the besiegers, sometimes to the defenders. The masters were quite pleased, and looked on, cheering those boys who showed most courage and cleverness.

Soon the fame of the fort spread far, and people came from all round about to see it and watch the fights. These went on as long as the snow lay upon the ground. But at last March came, the sun began to grow warm, the snow melted, and the storming and snow-balling came to an end. The masters were not sorry when this happened, as many of the boys had caught bad colds from playing so much in the snow. As for Napoleon, he was more sure than ever that the life of a soldier was the grandest possible, and he felt that he was born to make others obey him.

As to his lessons, Napoleon learned no Greek, and never did his Latin well. He loved the tales of the Greek and Roman heroes, but he read them in translations. It seemed to him waste of time to try to read them in a dead or foreign language. At arithmetic and geometry he was good. He liked his geography lessons too, but above all he loved history. Whenever he had a spare moment he might be found reading, and it was history and the lives of great men that he read. Indeed he often read when he ought to have been playing games. So he never grew tall; and although his shoulders were broad, he was thin and delicate-looking.

CHAPTER II

NAPOLEON AN OFFICER

There was still another year to pass in Brienne, Napoleon thought. But one day he was told that he had been admitted to the military school at Paris. And on the 30th of October 1784 he set out for the capital with four other boys.

At Paris Napoleon was in his element. It seemed to him that he was no longer at school, but in a city under arms and in a state of war. All around him he saw men in uniforms. He was no longer awakened from sleep or called to class by the sound of a bell, but by the rat-tat of a drum. Sentinels marched to and fro. Every hour, by night or day, he heard the sharp word of command, the ring and thud of grounding muskets. All the talk was of war, and the boys discussed together the regiments to which they would belong, their uniforms, and arms.

When Napoleon had been a year in Paris he passed his examinations, and received his commission as second lieutenant in the artillery regiment of La Fère, one of the finest in the army, and on the 30th of October 1785 he and another boy set out to join their regiment at Valence. They were only boys of sixteen

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and seventeen, but they felt very grand, for now they were real officers. They wore swords and belts and silver collar-clasps. But to their great grief they were not yet allowed to wear the uniform of their regiment, but had to travel in their school uniforms. Still, it was a fine thing to wear a sword. So they climbed joyfully into the Lyons coach, and were soon whirling away southwards behind spanking horses.

The La Fère regiment, being one of the best, was one of the most hard-working of the French artillery. The men got up early, and worked hard at marching, drilling, and shooting. Napoleon was in a way still a pupil. He had to begin at the bottom, to serve first as a gunner, then as corporal and sergeant, so that he might know his work in every detail. Then only was he considered fit to be an officer.

Besides drilling and studying gunnery, he read everything he could about soldiers and about war. He learned, too, to draw maps and plans, and as he was one of the keenest, soon became one of the best, of the officers of the regiment.

But he did not spend all his time in work; he often went home on leave. He had his share too in all the fun and jokes of which his companions were fond. He took part in dinners, balls, and parties. Indeed since he had become an officer, Napoleon was no longer the moody boy he had been, although at times he might have fits of passion.

But meanwhile, as the days and months went on, great changes were taking place in France.

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At this time the position of King and people in France was very different from what it was in Britain. The people, of Britain, through long years of struggle, had gained freedom. There they lived under what is called a limited monarchy; that is, the power of the King was held in check by Lords and Commons. But in France there was no check upon the King. He could do as he liked. Under him, there were the “three estates”—that is, the nobles, the clergy, and the people. The nobles and the clergy paid no taxes. They were called the privileged classes. They and the King spent a great deal of money. So the third estate—that is, the people—had to pay. Every year the King and nobles spent more and more. Every year the people had to pay more and more.

As the years went on the people grew more and more miserable, and more and more weary of their rulers. Many of them were very ignorant. They hardly knew what was wrong, or how it might be put right. They only knew that they were poor, miserable, and hungry. Riots grew frequent; all the summer of 1789 was stormy with them. At last the people broke out fiercely in Paris. They seized and pulled down the state prison. The King was powerless. “It is revolt,” said he, when he heard of it.

“Nay, sire,” replied his minister, “it is revolution.”

Soon all over France revolution was blazing. The King was driven from the throne. Everything was turned topsy-turvy, and men knew not whom to follow.

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But Napoleon was no Frenchman. He was a Corsican. The troubles of France did not touch him, except that he thought perhaps out of them good might come to his dear island. And so in this time of wild unrest he asked for leave and went home.

For the next four years Napoleon divided his time between France and Corsica.

Corsica, like France, was in a state of turmoil and anarchy. Paoli, the great Corsican hero, had returned from exile, and was everywhere greeted with cheers.

When a boy Napoleon had loved and honoured Paoli. But soon these two, the grey old hero whose work was done, and the brown-faced lad whose work was only beginning, quarrelled. The story of these quarrels is hard to follow, but at last Napoleon, who had been a great patriot, took the side of France. Then he and all his family were forced to flee from Corsica in secret, and after many adventures they arrived safely in Marseilles. There Napoleon left his mother and sisters in great poverty, and went to join his regiment, which was now at Nice. From henceforth he was a Frenchman.

When the French rebelled against their King, many of the princes and rulers of the other countries of Europe joined together and threatened to make war against France, unless the French people placed Louis upon the throne again.

At first Britain did not openly join with the others. But in January 1793 the French put their King to death, and a few weeks after Britain joined the allies.

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Even some of the French themselves joined them, so that France had to fight a civil war as well as one against foreign enemies.

Among the French who helped the allies, and who were helped by them, were the people of Toulon. An army of the allies took possession of the fortress, and a squadron of British ships lay in the harbour, while the French Revolutionary army besieged the town.

Napoleon now joined this army as commander of artillery, and it is from the siege of Toulon that his fame as a soldier dates. It is said by some, indeed, that the taking of the town was almost entirely due to him, but others think that his part in it was really very small.

However that may be, when Napoleon arrived at Toulon the army was badly officered, and there was hardly any artillery at all. He at once set eagerly to work, and in a few days he had forty cannon and everything needed for the building of new forts. He gathered shot and shell, too, and built forts and batteries. He wrote, ordered, and fought unceasingly.

For weeks, the siege went on. There were attacks and counter-attacks, assaults, and sallies, and at last a fort called L'Eguillette was taken. "To-morrow, or the day after, we shall sup in Toulon," said Napoleon.

And he was right. The British ships made ready to sail away. The people of Toulon were seized with panic. The British ships were their last and only hope. Nothing else could save them from falling into the hands of the terrible revolutionists, so they made ready

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to go with them. Soon the sea was crowded with boats carrying terror-stricken men, women, and children to the fleet. In their haste many were drowned, sometimes whole boat-loads being overturned by the too eager crowds.

All day the flight lasted. Then about nine o'clock in the evening a terrible explosion shook the earth. The sea seemed to belch forth fire, the dark night was suddenly bright as day, and horrible with noise and smoke. Fierce red flames licked the sky, and black against the lurid light, showed the shattered hulks of ships. It was the British commander who, before leaving, had set fire to a great part of the arsenal and blown up about a dozen French ships of war.

The siege was over, and next day the victorious troops marched into the now almost silent and deserted town.

Napoleon by this time had many good friends among the men who were ruling France, and it seemed as if his fortune was made. But these were very wild and uncertain times. His friends fell into disgrace, Napoleon himself was put into prison for a short time, and at last we find him once more, poor and lonely, wandering the streets of Paris, with nothing to do.

But it was now, when he, seemed forgotten and cast aside, that his great chance came to him.

France, besides having to fight outside enemies, was full of unrest and discontent within its borders. The people were tired of the Convention, as the Government was now called, and wished to overthrow

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THE LITTLE CORSICAN OFFICER

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its power. At last the citizens of Paris took up arms, and resolved to attack the palace of the Tuileries.

The members of the Convention then gathered to consult. They knew that their danger was great. They must do something quickly, if they were not to be overthrown. But who was to lead their soldiers.

Suddenly one of their number called Barras rose. "I know the man whom you want," he said. "He is a little Corsican officer who will not stand on ceremony."

So Napoleon was sent for.

It was by this time late at night. But Napoleon began to work at once, and by six o'clock next morning every street leading to the Tuileries was guarded with cannon.

The rioters had no cannon, but they were well armed with muskets, and thirty thousand of them came crowding along the narrow streets to besiege the palace.

For many hours the two forces stood facing each other, neither exchanging a shot; but at last, about half-past four, some one fired. It was a signal for all to begin. Napoleon's cannon swept the streets. The rioters fled before the hail of grape-shot, leaving their dead upon the ground. By six in the evening all was quiet again. Thanks to "the little Corsican," the Convention had won. And Napoleon had gained for himself the post of commander-in-chief of the army of the Interior.

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One day very soon after this a boy of about twelve asked to see Napoleon. The boy's name was Eugène Beauharnais, and with tears in his eyes he told Napoleon that his father had been a soldier. He had fought for the Republic, but had been killed. Now Eugène came to beg for his father's sword.

Napoleon was sorry for the boy, and ordered at once that the sword should be given to him. As soon as Eugène saw it he seized it, kissed it, and carried it away happy.

The next day, Eugène's mother, who was a very beautiful lady, came to thank Napoleon for having been so kind to her boy. Soon Napoleon began to love this beautiful lady, although she was many years older than he. She loved him too, and in a short time they were married.

So in a few months, from being almost penniless and unknown, Napoleon had become famous and well off, and had married a fine lady, who was able to make friends for him among the rulers of the land.

But Josephine de Beauharnais had married a great man, or rather, a man who was going to be great, and a few days after the wedding they had to say good-bye to each other. For among the Alps there was still fighting, and Napoleon was ordered off to take command of the army of Italy.

It will not be possible to follow Napoleon through all his battles. He had to fight two armies—one Austrian and one Sardinian. Against so strong an enemy he knew that his only hope was in quick marches and surprises. He must surround and astonish

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the foe, and take him at a disadvantage. To do this his own army must travel without baggage, so as to be able to move quickly, and must trust to finding all they needed for food and clothes in the country to which they went.

Napoleon knew that if the two armies of his enemies joined and attacked him together, they would be too strong for him. So he tried to keep them apart, and to fight first one and then the other. This he succeeded in doing. He led his soldiers with splendid skill. He beat every enemy who came against him, both in the plains of Italy and in the mountains of Austria. Nearly the whole of Italy was in his hands when at last peace was made.

First, a treaty, called the treaty of Leoben, from the name of the town in Austria where it was signed was agreed upon. Later came another, called the treaty of Campo Formio. By this treaty much land was added to France, and Napoleon made the first of those changes in the map of Europe for which he was soon to be famous.

Napoleon, in all his fighting in Italy, did not act merely as a commander and soldier. He acted more like a conqueror and ruler. It seemed as if he were not working for the Republic of France, but for himself. He did as he liked. "Do you suppose," he said, "that I triumph in Italy for the glory of the lawyers of the Directory? Do you suppose I mean to found a Republic? What an idea! The nation wants a chief, a chief covered with glory."

NAPOLEON AN OFFICER



NAPOLEON AT LODI

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He had covered himself with glory. His soldiers, whom he led with such splendid success, with such skill and daring, loved him.

They called him the "Little Corporal." This name they gave him after the crossing of the river Adda at the bridge of Lodi. The Austrians were on one side of the river, the French on the other. Shouting "Long live the Republic!" the French charged the bridge. But such a terrible fire met them that they wavered. Then Napoleon himself seized a standard and urged them onward. The bridge was passed. Right up to the enemy's guns they charged. The gunners died at their posts, but the Austrians were scattered, and fled in utter confusion, chased by the French, until darkness ended the flight and slaughter.

Napoleon himself called it "the terrible passage of Lodi," and it was after this battle that the French delighted with their clever leader called him the "Little Corporal," which for many a day was his name among his soldiers.