

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE STORY OF  
NAPOLEON

Henrietta E. Marshall

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED



# The Story of Napoleon

H.E. MARSHALL



LIVING BOOK  
PRESS

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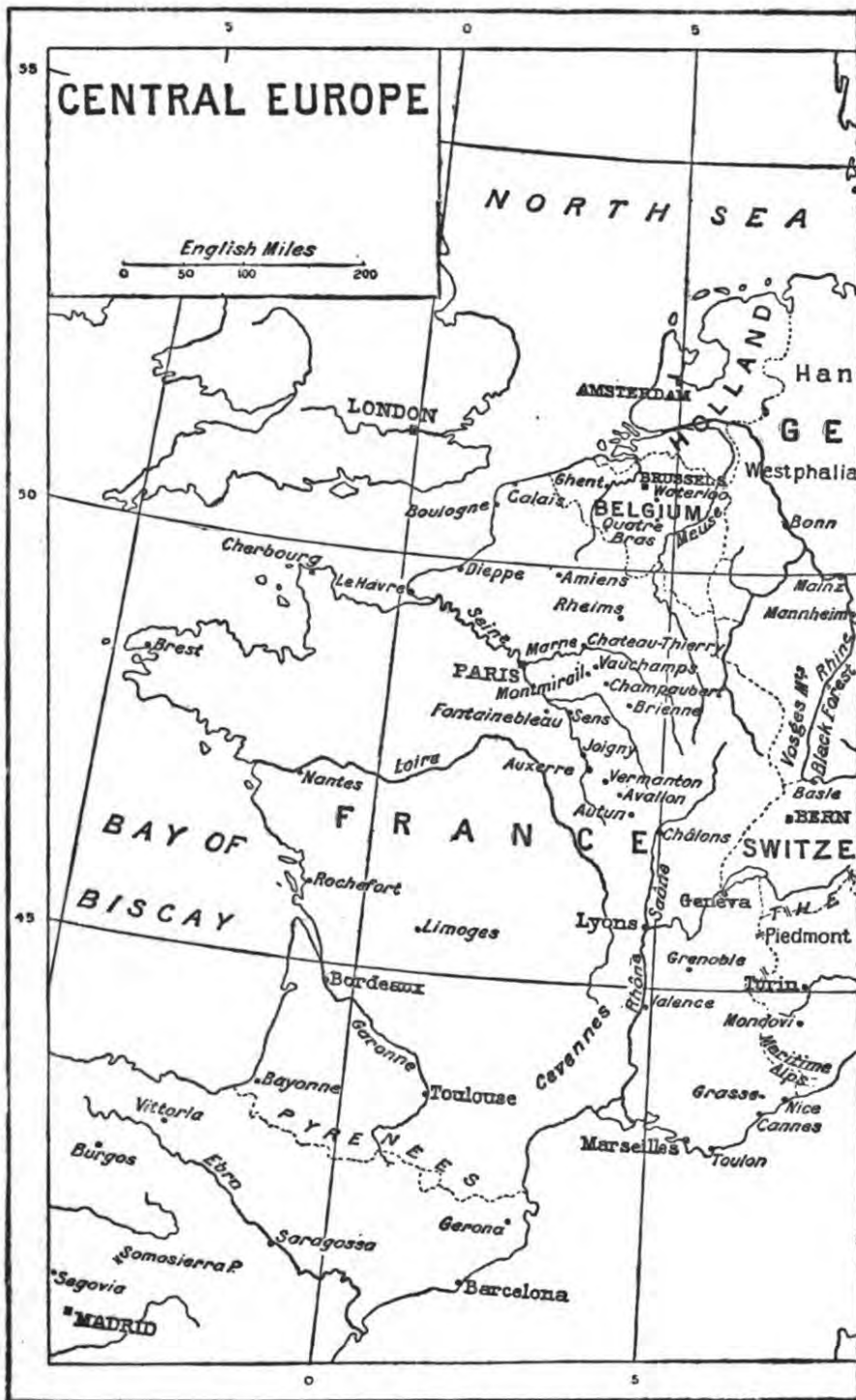
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- BATTLEFIELDS OF BELGIUM**
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## **NAPOLEON AT SCHOOL**

**T**O 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 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 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 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.

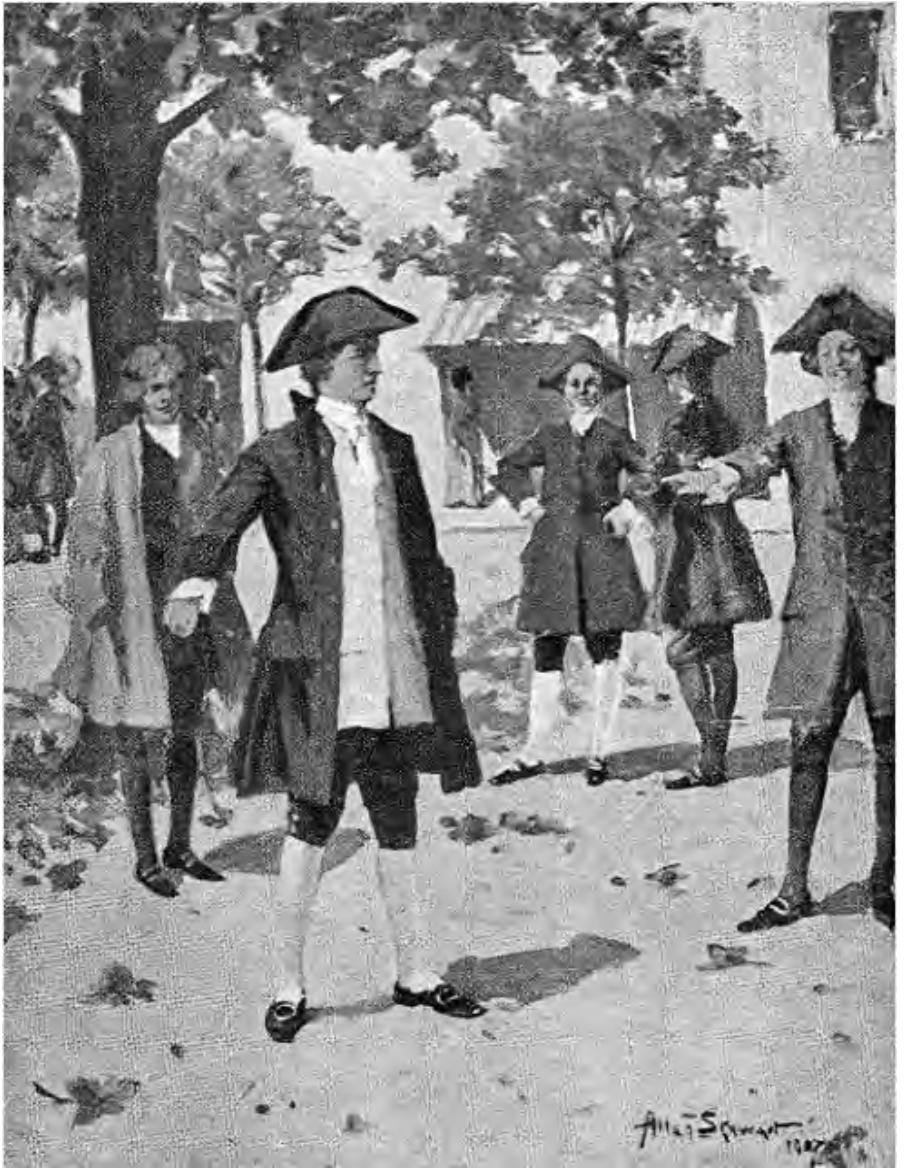
Napoleon loved soldiers better than anything else and he longed to be one. Every morning, before he went to school, he was given a piece of white bread. This he used to give to a soldier in exchange for a piece of coarse brown bread. His mother was not very pleased at this. "Why do you give away your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



NAPOLEON AS A BOY.

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 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 home-sick. 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 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 snowballing 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.