

## NAPOLEON, As Seen by His Associates

### NAPOLEON'S EARLY LOVES

IX.  
WHEN Napoleon was in his seventeenth year he had a boyish attachment for Mile. du Colombier, whose family well came him in a social way while he was stationed at Valence with his regiment. In the same circle he met Mile. de Saint-Germain, of whom he afterward said, "Of old I loved both her virtues and her beauty."

These affairs seemed to leave no deep impression upon Napoleon's heart, and he remained fancy free until he reached man's estate, or 1795. About that time his thoughts turned to matrimony, hastened possibly by the good fortune of his brother Joseph. Bourrienne, his bosom friend, and in his confidence, says:

"He envied Joseph's happiness, who had just married at Marseilles Mile. Clary, daughter of a rich tradesman in the town who enjoyed a good reputa-



GENERAL BONAPARTE, DRAWN FROM LIFE IN ITALY, 1795.

tion. "What a lucky rascal Joseph is! That was the way in which he expressed the slight feeling of envy that was in him."

Being in Marseilles early in 1795, Napoleon paid serious attention to Mile. Joseph's sister, Desirée-Eugénie Clary, a girl of 16. Letters penned to Joseph during the separation which followed the first season of love-making reveal Napoleon's state of mind. These letters were all written within the space of five weeks.

"Remember me to your wife and to Desirée," he writes cautiously, and still later: "Desirée asks for my portrait. I will have it taken for her. You must give it to her if she still wants it; if not, keep it yourself."

In order to get to Genoa it seems necessary to cross the river Lethé, for Desirée has not written to me since she went to Genoa."

"I believe you purposely omit all mention of Desirée. I don't know whether she is alive or dead."

"If I remain here it is just possible that I might feel inclined to commit the folly of marrying. I should be glad of a line from you on the subject. You might perhaps speak to Eugénie's brother and let me know what he says, and then it will be settled."

"Continue to keep me carefully informed; talk to me of your plans and try so to arrange my business that my absence may not prevent that which I long for."

Napoleon was in turbulent Paris then, awaiting the call of destiny, which accounts for the anxious note in one of his letters from the absent "Eugénie," as she signed herself, the name which her lover favored.

"Oh, my friend," she wrote, "take care of yourself for my sake, for I could not live without you. Guard as sacredly as I shall the promise which binds us, for were it broken I should die."

But in spite of her protestations Eugénie was a lax correspondent, and at last Napoleon wrote in despair to Joseph:

"This affair must either be concluded or broken off. I await an answer with the greatest impatience."

Napoleon is depicted at this time as being in a most hopeless frame of mind. Says the Duchesse d'Abrantes:

"He was morally and physically wrecked. He was to be met wandering about the streets of Paris in an awkward and ungainly manner, with a shabby round hat thrust down over his eyes and with his curls (known at that time as oreilles de chien) badly powdered, badly combed and falling over the collar of the iron gray coat which has since become so celebrated."

Communication between the lovers soon lapsed into friendly messages sent in Joseph's letters. Meanwhile Napoleon was rapidly losing himself in Paris. Still inclined to "commit the folly of marrying" himself and to involve his destiny in the same time, he planned three weddings in the family of the Widow Permon, mother of the Duchesse d'Abrantes. He had conquered the sections and was already jangling with Josephine. Bernadotte, and also with two other widows who rejected offers of marriage. Says the Duchesse d'Abrantes:

"Bonaparte proposed to my mother a match between my brother Albert and his sister, Mile. Pauline. Bonaparte, called by her family and all her friends Pretty Paulette. This proposal he followed up by the plan of a second alliance between me and his brother Louis or Jerome. Jerome is younger than Laurette," said my mother, laughing. "Indeed, my dear Napoleon, you are acting the high priest today; you are marrying everybody, even children! Bonaparte laughed, too, but with an air of embarrassment. He admitted that when he got up that morning a marriage breeze had blown upon him, and, to prove it, he added, kissing my mother's hand, that he had made up his mind to ask her to commence the union of the two families by a marriage between him and herself as soon as a regard to decency would permit."

"My mother has frequently related to me this extraordinary scene, so that I am as well acquainted with it as if I had been the principal actress in it. The eyes of Bonaparte for some seconds with an astonishment bordering upon stupefaction and then burst into so hearty a laugh that we heard her in the next room, where there were three or four of us. Bonaparte was at first much vexed at this manner of receiving a proposal which appeared to him quite natural. My mother, who perceived it, hastened to explain herself and told him that it was she, on the contrary, who in this affair played, at least in her own eyes, a perfect ridiculous part. 'My dear Napoleon,' said she when she had done laughing, 'let us talk seriously. You fancy you are acquainted with my age. The truth is you know nothing about it. I shall not tell it you, because it is not only your weakness, I shall merely say that I am old enough to be not only your mother, but Joseph's, too. Spare me

this kind of joke. It distresses me, coming from you."

"Bonaparte reassured her over and over again that he was serious; that the age of the woman whom he should marry was indifferent to him if, like herself, she did not appear to be past thirty; that he had maturely considered the proposal which he had just made to her, and he added these very remarkable words: 'I am determined to marry. They want to give me a woman who is charming, good tempered, agreeable and who belongs to the Faubourg St. Germain. My Paris friends are in favor of this match. My old friends dissuade me from it. For my own part, I wish to marry, and what I propose to you suits me in many respects. Think about it.' My mother broke off the conversation, telling him laughingly that for her own part she had no occasion to think any further. She gave him her hand and repeated, still laughing, that, though she had some pretensions, they did not aspire so high as to conquer the heart of a man twenty-six."

Mme. Permon did not change her mind, and Napoleon wedded the "charming, good tempered, agreeable" Josephine Bernadotte. Then his Eugénie Clary, aroused at last, opened her heart in a pathetic letter.

"You have broken my heart," she wrote him, "yet I am weak enough to forgive you everything. You are married, and I have no longer the right to love and think of you. The only consolation which remains for me is to be assured of your belief in my constancy; then I long for death, for life is a burden now that I may not consecrate it to you. I cannot accustom myself to the thought that you are married. It is too hard, too cruel. I will prove to you that I am more faithful to my engagement than you to yours, and though you have broken the chain which united us, I shall hold it binding. I shall never marry. I wish you every happiness and all prosperity in your marriage, and I hope that the woman you have chosen will make you as happy as I had meant to do and as you deserve. But in the midst of your happiness remember poor Eugénie and pity her sad fate."

But she did marry, and Napoleon long interested himself in the fortunes of her husband, General Bernadotte. On one occasion he wrote to Bernadotte, who had just been wounded in battle:

"I am glad to learn that Mme. Bernadotte is with you. Pray give her my affectionate regards and add that I have one little thing to reproach her with—she might have written me a line giving me the news of Paris, but I will have it out with her when we meet."

Mme. Bernadotte asked Napoleon to stand as godfather to her firstborn, and when he became emperor he showered honors and wealth upon her husband, who was finally called from French battlefields to the throne of Sweden. Said Napoleon:

"Bernadotte's becoming a marshal of France, prince of Pontecorvo and king of Sweden were all owing to his marriage with my first sweetheart."

The first offspring of this marriage, Oscar Bernadotte, married Josephine Bernadotte, daughter of the first Josephine's son Eugene. Oscar succeeded his father to the throne of Sweden, and his son, uniting in his blood that of Bernadotte, Beauharnais and Clary, is the present king of Sweden and Norway, Oscar II. Thus while the Bonaparte dynasty is extinct, a lineal descendant of Josephine Bernadotte, the wife whom Napoleon divorced, and of Desirée-Eugénie Clary, the sweetheart who accused him of jilting her, wears a crown, which in the natural course of things will remain in the family for generations.

GEORGE L. KILMER.

Note—"The Little Corporal and His Soldiers," will be the title of next week's letter.

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