

LOUIS DE BOURRIENNE

MEMOIRS OF NAPOLEON
BONAPARTE — VOLUME
05

Louis Antoine Fauvelet Bourrienne
Memoirs of Napoleon
Bonaparte — Volume 05

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=34840486
Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte — Volume 05:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	30
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	40

Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte — Volume 05

CHAPTER I

1800.

Bonaparte's confidence in the army—'Ma belle' France—The convent of Bernadins—Passage of Mont St. Bernard—Arrival at the convent—Refreshments distributed to the soldiers—Mont Albaredo—Artillery dismounted—The fort of Bard—Fortunate temerity—Bonaparte and Melas—The spy—Bonaparte's opinion of M. Necker—Capitulation of Genoa—Intercepted despatch—Lannes at Montebello—Boudet succeeded by Desaix—Coolness of the First Consul to M. Collot—Conversation and recollections—The battle of Marengo—General Kellerman—Supper sent from the Convent del Bosco—Particulars respecting the death of Desaix—The Prince of Lichtenstein—Return to Milan—Savary and Rapp.

It cannot be denied that if, from the 18th Brumaire to the epoch when Bonaparte began the campaign, innumerable

improvements had been made in the internal affairs of France, foreign affairs could not be seen with the same satisfaction. Italy had been lost, and from the frontiers of Provence the Austrian camp fires were seen. Bonaparte was not ignorant of the difficulties of his position, and it was even on account of these very difficulties that, whatever might be the result of his hardy enterprise, he wished to escape from it as quickly as possible. He cherished no illusions, and often said all must be staked to gain all.

The army which the First Consul was preparing to attack was numerous, well disciplined, and victorious.

His, with the exception of a very small number of troops, was composed of conscripts; but these conscripts were commanded by officers whose ardour was unparalleled. Bonaparte's fortune was now to depend on the winning or losing of a battle. A battle lost would have dispelled all the dreams of his imagination, and with them would have vanished all his immense schemes for the future of France. He saw the danger, but was not intimidated by it; and trusting to his accustomed good fortune, and to the courage and fidelity of his troops, he said, "I have, it is true, many conscripts in my army, but they are Frenchmen. Four years ago did I not with a feeble army drive before me hordes of Sardinians and Austrians, and scour the face of Italy? We shall do so again. The sun which now shines on us is the same that shone at Arcola and Lodi. I rely on Massena. I hope he will hold out in Genoa. But should famine oblige him to surrender, I will retake Genoa

in the plains of the Scrivia. With what pleasure shall I then return to my dear France! Ma belle France."

At this moment, when a possible, nay, a probable chance, might for ever have blasted his ambitious hopes, he for the first time spoke of France as his. Considering the circumstances in which we then stood, this use of the possessive pronoun "my" describes more forcibly than anything that can be said the flashes of divination which crossed Bonaparte's brain when he was wrapped up in his chimerical ideas of glory and fortune.

In this favourable disposition of mind the First Consul arrived at Martigny on the 20th of May. Martigny is a convent of Bernardines, situated in a valley where the rays of the sun scarcely ever penetrate. The army was in full march to the Great St. Bernard. In this gloomy solitude did Bonaparte wait three days, expecting the fort of Bard, situated beyond the mountain and covering the road to Yvree, to surrender. The town was carried on the 21st of May, and on the third day he learned that the fort still held out, and that there were no indications of its surrender. He launched into complaints against the commander of the siege, and said, "I am weary of staying in this convent; those fools will never take Bard; I must go myself and see what can be done. They cannot even settle so contemptible an affair without me!" He immediately gave orders for our departure.

The grand idea of the invasion of Italy by crossing Mont St. Bernard emanated exclusively from the First Consul. This miraculous achievement justly excited the admiration of the

world. The incredible difficulties it presented did not daunt the courage of Bonaparte's troops. His generals, accustomed as they had been to brave fatigue and danger, regarded without concern the gigantic enterprise of the modern Hannibal.

A convent or hospice, which had been established on the mountain for the purpose of affording assistance to solitary travellers, sufficiently bespeaks the dangers of these stormy regions. But the St. Bernard was now to be crossed, not by solitary travellers, but by an army. Cavalry, baggage, limbers, and artillery were now to wend their way along those narrow paths where the goat-herd cautiously picks his footsteps. On the one hand masses of snow, suspended above our heads, every moment threatened to break in avalanches, and sweep us away in their descent. On the other, a false step was death. We all passed, men and horse, one by one, along the goat paths. The artillery was dismounted, and the guns, put into excavated trunks of trees, were drawn by ropes.

I have already mentioned that the First Consul had transmitted funds to the hospice of the Great St. Bernard. The good fathers had procured from the two valleys a considerable supply of cheese, bread, and wine. Tables were laid out in front of the hospice, and each soldier as he defiled past took a glass of wine and a piece of bread and cheese, and then resigned his place to the next. The fathers served, and renewed the portions with admirable order and activity.

The First Consul ascended the St. Bernard with that calm self-

possession and that air of indifference for which he was always remarkable when he felt the necessity of setting an example and exposing himself to danger. He asked his guide many questions about the two valleys, inquired what were the resources of the inhabitants, and whether accidents were as frequent as they were said to be. The guide informed him that the experience of ages enabled the inhabitants to foresee good or bad weather, and that they were seldom deceived.

Bonaparte, who wore his gray greatcoat, and had his whip in his hand, appeared somewhat disappointed at not seeing any one come from the valley of Aorta to inform him of the taking of the fort of Bard. I never left him for a moment during the ascent. We encountered no personal danger, and escaped with no other inconvenience than excessive fatigue.

On his arrival at the convent the First Consul visited the chapel and the three little libraries. He had time to read a few pages of an old book, of which I have forgotten the title.

Our breakfast-dinner was very frugal. The little garden was still covered with snow, and I said to one of the fathers, "You can have but few vegetables here."—"We get our vegetables from the valleys," he replied; "but in the month of August, in warm seasons, we have a few lettuces of our own growing."

When we reached the summit of the mountain we seated ourselves on the snow and slid down. Those who went first smoothed the way for those who came behind them. This rapid descent greatly amused us, and we were only stopped by the mud

which succeeded the snow at the distance of five or six hundred toises down the declivity.

We crossed, or rather climbed up, Mont Albaredo to avoid passing under the fort of Bard, which closes the valley of Aorta. As it was impossible to get the artillery up this mountain it was resolved to convey it through the town of Bard, which was not fortified. For this operation we made choice of night, and the wheels of the cannon and caissons, and even the horses' feet, being wrapped in straw, the whole passed quietly through the little town. They were, indeed, under the fire of the fort; however, it did not so completely command the street but that the houses would have protected them against any very fatal consequences. A great part of the army had passed before the surrender of the fort, which so completely commands the narrow valley leading to Aorta that it is difficult to comprehend the negligence of the Austrians in not throwing up more efficient works; by very simple precautions they might have rendered the passage of St. Bernard unavailing.

On the 23d we came within sight of the fort of Bard, which commands the road bounded by the Doria Baltea on the right and Mont Albaredo on the left. The Doria Baltea is a small torrent which separates the town of Bard from the fort. Bonaparte, whose retinue was not very numerous, crossed the torrent. On arriving within gunshot of the fort he ordered us to quicken our pace to gain a little bridle-path on the left, leading to the summit of Mont Albaredo, and turning the town and fort of Bard.

We ascended this path on foot with some difficulty. On reaching the summit of the mountain, which commands the fort, Bonaparte levelled his telescope on the grass, and stationing himself behind some bushes, which served at once to shelter and conceal him, he attentively reconnoitered the fort. After addressing several questions to the persons who had come to give him information, he mentioned, in a tone of dissatisfaction, the faults that had been committed, and ordered the erection of a new battery to attack a point which he marked out, and from whence, he guaranteed, the firing of a few shots would oblige the fort to surrender. Having given these orders he descended the mountain and went to sleep that night at Yvree. On the 3d of June he learned that the fort had surrendered the day before.

The passage of Mont St. Bernard must occupy a great place in the annals of successful temerity. The boldness of the First Consul seemed, as it were, to have fascinated the enemy, and his enterprise was so unexpected that not a single Austrian corps defended the approaches of the fort of Bard. The country was entirely exposed, and we only encountered here and there a few feeble parties, who were incapable of checking our march upon Milan. Bonaparte's advance astonished and confounded the enemy, who thought of nothing but marching back the way he came, and renouncing the invasion of France. The bold genius which actuated Bonaparte did not inspire General Melas, the commander-in-chief of the Austrian forces. If Melas had had the firmness which ought to belong to the leader of an

army—if he had compared the respective positions of the two parties—if he had considered that there was no longer time to regain his line of operations and recover his communication with the Hereditary States, that he was master of all the strong places in Italy, that he had nothing to fear from Massena, that Suchet could not resist him:—if, then, following Bonaparte's example, he had marched upon Lyons, what would have become of the First Consul? Melas would have found few obstacles, and almost everywhere open towns, while the French army would have been exhausted without having an enemy to fight. This is, doubtless, what Bonaparte would have done had he been Melas; but, fortunately for us, Melas was not Bonaparte.

We arrived at Milan on the 2d of June, the day on which the First Consul heard that the fort of Bard was taken. But little resistance was opposed to our entrance to the capital of Lombardy, and the term "engagements" can scarcely be applied to a few affairs of advance posts, in which success could not be for a moment doubtful; the fort of Milan was immediately blockaded. Murat was sent to Piacenza, of which he took possession without difficulty, and Lannes beat General Ott at Montebello. He was far from imagining that by that exploit he conquered for himself a future duchy!

The First Consul passed six days at Milan. On the day after our arrival there a spy who had served us very well in the first campaign in Italy was announced. The First Consul recollected him, and ordered him to be shown into his cabinet. —"What, are

you here?" he exclaimed; "so you are not shot yet!"—"General," replied the spy, "when the war recommenced I determined to serve the Austrians because you were far from Europe. I always follow the fortunate; but the truth is, I am tired of the trade. I wish to have done with it, and to get enough to enable me to retire. I have been sent to your lines by General Melas, and I can render you an important service. I will give an exact account of the force and the position of all the enemy's corps, and the names of their commanders. I can tell you the situation in which Alessandria now is. You know me I will not deceive you; but, I must carry back some report to my general. You need not care for giving me some true particulars which I can communicate to him."—"Oh! as to that," resumed the First Consul, "the enemy is welcome to know my forces and my positions, provided I know his, and he be ignorant of my plans. You shall be satisfied; but do not deceive me: you ask for 1000 Louis, you shall have them if you serve me well." I then wrote down from the dictation of the spy, the and the names of the corps, their amount, their positions, names of the generals commanding them. The Consul stuck pins in the map to mark his plans on places respecting which he received information from the spy. We also learned that Alexandria was without provisions, that Melas was far from expecting a siege, that many of his troops were sick, and that he wanted medicines. Berthier was ordered to draw up for the spy a nearly accurate statement of our positions.

The information given by this man proved so accurate and

useful that on his return from Marengo Bonaparte ordered me to pay him the 1000 Louis. The spy afterwards informed him that Melas was delighted with the way in which he had served him in this affair, and had rewarded him handsomely. He assured us that he had bidden farewell to his odious profession. The First Consul regarded this little event as one of the favours of fortune.

In passing through Geneva the First Consul had an interview with M. Necker.

—[Madame de Stael briefly mention this interview in her 'Considerations sur la Revolution Francaise' "M. Necker," she says, "had an interview with Bonaparte, when he was on his way to Italy by the passage of Mont. St. Bernard, a few days before the battle of Marengo, During this conversation, which lasted two hours, the First Consul made a very favourable impression on my father by the confident way he spoke of his future projects."— Bourrienne.]—

I know not how it happened, but at the time he did not speak to me of this interview. However, I was curious to know what he thought of a man who had acquired much celebrity in France. One evening, when we were talking of one thing and another, I managed to turn the conversation on that subject. M. Necker," said he, "appears to me very far below his reputation. He did not equal the idea I had formed of him. I tried all I could to get him to talk; but he said nothing remarkable. He is an ideologist—

—[This was a constant term of reproach with Bonaparte.

He set all the metaphysicians of the Continent against him by exclaiming, "Je ne veux point d'ideologues."—

a banker. It is impossible that such a man can have any but narrow views; and, besides, most celebrated people lose on a close view."— "Not always, General," observed I—"Ah!" said he, smiling, "that is not bad, Bourrienne. You are improving. I see I shall make something of you in time!"

The day was approaching when all was to be lost or won. The First Consul made all his arrangements, and sent off the different corps to occupy the points he had marked out. I have already mentioned that Murat's task was the occupation of Piacenza. As soon as he was in possession of that town he intercepted a courier of General Melas. The despatch, which was addressed to the Aulic Council of Vienna, was delivered to us on the night of the 8th of June. It announced the capitulation of Genoa, which took place on the 4th, after the long and memorable defence which reflected so much honour on Massena. Melas in his despatch spoke of what he called our pretended army of reserve with inconceivable contempt, and alluded to the presence of Bonaparte in Italy as a mere fabrication. He declared he was still in Paris. It was past three in the morning when Murat's courier arrived. I immediately translated the despatch, which was in German. About four o'clock I entered the chamber of the First Consul, whom I was obliged to shake by the arm in order to wake him. He had desired me; as I have already mentioned, never to respect his repose on the arrival of bad news; but on the receipt

of good news to let him sleep. I read to him the despatch, and so much was he confounded by this unexpected event that his first exclamation was, "Bah! you do not understand German." But hardly had he uttered these words when he arose, and by eight o'clock in the morning orders were despatched for repairing the possible consequences of this disaster, and countermanding the march of the troops on the Scrivia. He himself proceeded the same day to Stradella.

I have seen it mentioned in some accounts that the First Consul in person gained the battle of Montebello. This is a mistake. He did not leave Milan until the 9th of June, and that very day Lannes was engaged with the enemy. The conflict was so terrible that Lannes, a few days after, describing it in my presence to M. Collot, used these remarkable words, which I well remember: "Bones were cracking in my division like a shower of hail falling on a skylight."

By a singular chance Desaix, who was to contribute to the victory and stop the rout of Marengo, arrived from Egypt at Toulon, on the very day on which we departed from Paris. He was enabled to leave Egypt in consequence of the capitulation of El-Arish, which happened on the 4th of January 1800. He wrote me a letter, dated 16th Floreal, year VIII. (6th of May 1800), announcing his arrival. This letter I did not receive until we reached Martigny. I showed it to the First Consul. "Ah!" exclaimed he, "Desaix in Paris!" and he immediately despatched an order for him to repair to the headquarters of the army of

Italy wherever they might be. Desaix arrived at Stradella on the morning of the 11th of June. The First Consul received him with the warmest cordiality, as a man for whom he had a high esteem, and whose talents and character afforded the fairest promise of what might one day be expected of him. Bonaparte was jealous of some generals, the rivalry of whose ambition he feared; but on this subject Desaix gave him no uneasiness; equally remarkable for his unassuming disposition, his talent, and information, he proved by his conduct that he loved glory for her own sake, and that every wish for the possession of political power was foreign to his mind. Bonaparte's friendship for him was enthusiastic. At this interview at Stradella, Desaix was closeted with the First Consul for upwards of three hours. On the day after his arrival an order of the day communicated to the army that Desaix was appointed to the command of Boudet's division.

—[Boudet was on terms of great intimacy with Bonaparte, who, no doubt, was much affected at his death. However, the only remark he made on receiving the intelligence, was "Who the devil shall I get to supply Boudet's place?"—Bourrienne.

The command given to Desaix was a corps especially formed of the two divisions of Boudet and Monnier (Savary, tome i. p. 262). Boudet was not killed at Marengo, still less before (see *Erreurs*, tome i. p. 14).]—

I expressed to Bonaparte my surprise at his long interview with Desaix. "Yes," replied he, "he has been a long time with me;

but you know what a favourite he is. As soon as I return to Paris I will make him War Minister. I would make him a prince if I could. He is quite an antique character." Desaix died two days after he had completed his thirty-third year, and in less than a week after the above observations.

About this time M. Collot came to Italy and saw Bonaparte at Milan. The latter received him coldly, though he had not yet gained the battle of Marengo. M. Collot had been on the most intimate footing with Bonaparte, and had rendered him many valuable services. These circumstances sufficiently accounted for Bonaparte's coolness, for he would never acknowledge himself under obligations to any one, and he did not like those who were initiated into certain family secrets which he had resolved to conceal.

—[The day after the interview I had a long conversation with M. Collot while Bonaparte was gone to review some corps stationed at Milan. M. Collot perfectly understood the cause of the unkind treatment he had experienced, and of which he gave me the following explanation:

Some days before the Consulate—that is to say, two or three days after our return from Egypt,—Bonaparte, during his jealous fit, spoke to M. Collot about his wife, her levities, and their publicity. "Henceforth," said Bonaparte, "I will have nothing to do with her."—"What, would you part from her?"—"Does not her conduct justify me in so doing?"—"I do not know; but is this the time to think of such a thing, when the eyes of all France are fixed upon

you? These domestic squabbles will degrade you in the eyes of the people, who expect you to be wholly devoted to their interests; and you will be laughed at, like one of Moliere's husbands, if you are displeased with your wife's conduct you can call her to account when you have nothing better to do. Begin by raising up the state. After that you may find a thousand reasons for your resentment when now you would not find one. You know the French people well enough to see how important it is that you should not commence with this absurdity."

By these and other similar remarks M. Collot thought he had produced some impression, when Bonaparte suddenly exclaimed: "No, my determination is fixed; she shall never again enter my house. I care not what people say. They will gossip about the affair for two days, and on the third it will be forgotten. She shall go to Malmaison, and I will live here. The public know enough, not to be mistaken as to the reasons of her removal."

M. Collot vainly endeavoured to calm his irritation. Bonaparte vented a torrent of reproaches upon Josephine. "All this violence," observed M. Collot, "proves that you still love her. Do but see her, she will explain the business to your satisfaction and you will forgive her.—"I forgive her! Never! Collot, you know me. If I were not sure of my own resolution, I would tear out this heart, and cast it into the fire." Here anger almost choked his utterance, and he made a motion with his hand as if tearing his breast.

When this violent paroxysm had somewhat subsided M. Collot withdrew; but before he went away Bonaparte invited

him to breakfast on the following morning.

At ten o'clock M. Collot was there, and as he was passing through the courtyard he was informed that Madame Bonaparte, who, as I have already mentioned, had gone to Lyons without meeting the General, had returned during the night. On M. Collot's entrance Bonaparte appeared considerably embarrassed. He led him into a side room, not wishing to bring him into the room where I was writing. "Well," said Bonaparte to M. Collot, "she is here."—"I rejoice to hear it. You have done well for yourself as well as for us."—"But do not imagine I have forgiven her. As long as I live I shall suspect. The fact is, that on her arrival I desired her to be gone; but that fool Joseph was there. What could I do, Collot? I saw her descend the staircase followed by Eugene and Hortense. They were all weeping; and I have not a heart to resist tears Eugene was with me in Egypt. I have been accustomed to look upon him as my adopted son. He is a fine brave lad. Hortense is just about to be introduced into society, and she is admired by all who know her. I confess, Collot, I was deeply moved; I could not endure the distress of the two poor children. 'Should they,' thought I, 'suffer for their mother's faults?' I called back Eugene and Hortense, and their mother followed them. What could I say, what could I do? I should not be a man without some weakness."—"Be assured they will reward you for this."—"They ought, Collot they ought; for it has cost me a hard struggle." After this dialogue Bonaparte and M. Collot entered the breakfast-parlour, where I was then sitting. Eugene breakfasted with us, but neither Josephine

nor Hortense. I have already related how I acted the part of mediator in this affair. Next day nothing was wanting to complete the reconciliation between the Conqueror of Egypt and the charming woman who conquered Bonaparte. — Bourrienne.]—

On the 13th the First Consul slept at Torre di Galifolo. During the evening he ordered a staff-officer to ascertain whether the Austrians had a bridge across the Bormida. A report arrived very late that there was none. This information set Bonaparte's mind at rest, and he went to bed very well satisfied; but early next morning, when a firing was heard, and he learned that the Austrians had debouched on the plain, where the troops were engaged, he flew into a furious passion, called the staff-officer a coward, and said he had not advanced far enough. He even spoke of bringing the matter to an investigation.

From motives of delicacy I refrain from mentioning the dame of the officer here alluded to.

Bonaparte mounted his horse and proceeded immediately to the scene of action. I did not see him again until six in the evening. In obedience to his instructions; I repaired to San Giuliano, which is not above two leagues from the place where the engagement commenced. In the course of the afternoon I saw a great many wounded passing through the village, and shortly afterwards a multitude of fugitives. At San Giuliano nothing was talked of but a retreat, which, it was said, Bonaparte alone firmly opposed. I was then advised to leave San Giuliano, where

I had just received a courier for the General-in-Chief. On the morning of the 14th General Desaix was sent towards Novi to observe the road to Genoa, which city had fallen several days before, in spite of the efforts of its illustrious defender, Massena. I returned with this division to San Giuliano. I was struck with the numerical weakness of the corps which was marching to aid an army already much reduced and dispersed. The battle was looked upon as lost, and so indeed it was. The First Consul having asked Desaix what he thought of it, that brave General bluntly replied, "The battle is completely lost; but it is only two o'clock, we have time to gain another to-day." I heard this from Bonaparte himself the same evening. Who could have imagined that Desaix's little corps, together with the few heavy cavalry commanded by General Kellerman, would, about five o'clock, have changed the fortune of the day? It cannot be denied that it was the instantaneous inspiration of Kellerman that converted a defeat into a victory, and decided the battle of Marengo.

That memorable battle, of which the results were incalculable, has been described in various ways. Bonaparte had an account of it commenced no less than three times; and I must confess that none of the narratives are more correct than that contained in the 'Memoirs of the Duke of Rovigo'. The Emperor Napoleon became dissatisfied with what had been said by the First Consul Bonaparte. For my part, not having had the honour to bear a sword, I cannot say that I saw any particular movement executed this or that way; but I may mention here what I heard on the

evening of the battle of Marengo respecting the probable chances of that event. As to the part which the First Consul took in it, the reader, perhaps, is sufficiently acquainted with his character to account for it. He did not choose that a result so decisive should be attributed to any other cause than the combinations of his genius, and if I had not known his insatiable thirst for glory I should have been surprised at the sort of half satisfaction evinced at the cause of the success amidst the joy manifested for the success itself. It must be confessed that in this he was very unlike Jourdan, Hoche, Kleber, and Moreau, who were ever ready to acknowledge the services of those who had fought under their orders.

Within two hours of the time when the divisions commanded by Desaix left San Giuliano I was joyfully surprised by the triumphant return of the army, whose fate, since the morning, had caused me so much anxiety. Never did fortune within so short a time show herself under two such various faces. At two o'clock all denoted the desolation of a defeat, with all its fatal consequences; at five victory was again faithful to the flag of Arcola. Italy was reconquered by a single blow, and the crown of France appeared in the perspective.

At seven in the evening, when I returned with the First Consul to headquarters, he expressed to me his sincere regret for the loss of Desaix, and then he added, "Little Kellerman made a lucky charge. He did it at just the right moment. We are much indebted to him. You see what trifling circumstances decide these affairs."

These few words show that Bonaparte sufficiently appreciated the services of Kellerman. However, when that officer approached the table at which were seated the First Consul and a number of his generals, Bonaparte merely said, "You made a pretty good charge." By way of counter-balancing this cool compliment he turned towards Bessieres, who commanded the horse grenadiers of the Guard, and said, "Bessieres, the Guard has covered itself with glory." Yet the fact is, that the Guard took no part in the charge of Kellerman, who could assemble only 500 heavy cavalry; and with this handful of brave men he cut in two the Austrian column, which had overwhelmed Desaix's division, and had made 6000 prisoners. The Guard did not charge at Marengo until nightfall.

Next day it was reported that Kellerman, in his first feeling of dissatisfaction at the dry congratulation he had received, said to the First Consul, "I have just placed the crown on your head!" I did not hear this, and I cannot vouch for the truth of its having been said. I could only have ascertained that fact through Bonaparte, and of course I could not, with propriety, remind him of a thing which must have been very offensive to him. However, whether true or not, the observation was circulated about, verbally and in writing, and Bonaparte knew it. Hence the small degree of favour shown to Kellerman, who was not made a general of division on the field of battle as a reward for his charge at Marengo.

—[If Savary's story be correct, and he was then aide de

camp to Desaix, and Bourrienne acknowledges his account to be the best, the inspiration of the charge did not come from the young Kellerman. Savary says that Desaix sent him to tell Napoleon that he could not delay his attack, and that he must be supported by some cavalry.

Savary was then sent by Napoleon to a spot where he was told he would find Kellerman, to order him to charge in support of Desaix. Desaix and Kellerman were so placed as to be out of sight of each other (Savary, tome i. pp. 279-279). Thiers (tome i, p. 445) follows Savary.

It may here be mentioned that Savary, in his account of the battle, expressly states that he carried the order from Bonaparte to Kellerman to make this charge. He also makes the following observations on the subject:—

After the fall of the Imperial Government some pretended friends of General Kellerman have presumed to claim for him the merit of originating the charge of cavalry. That general, whose share of glory is sufficiently brilliant to gratify his most sanguine wishes, can have no knowledge of so presumptuous a pretension. I the more readily acquit him from the circumstance that, as we were conversing one day respecting that battle, I called to his mind my having brought, to him the First Consul's orders, and he appeared not to have forgotten that fact. I am far from suspecting his friends of the design of lessening the glory of either General Bonaparte or General Desaix; they know as well as myself that theirs are names so respected that they can never be affected by such detractions, and that it would be as

vain to dispute the praise due to the Chief who planned the battle was to attempt to depreciate the brilliant share which General Kellerman had in its successful result. I will add to the above a few observations.

"From the position which he occupied General Desaix could not see General Kellerman; he had even desired me to request the First Consul to afford him the support of some cavalry. Neither could General Kellerman, from the point where he was stationed, perceive General Desaix's division; it is even probable that he was not aware of the arrival of that General, who had only joined the army two days before. Both were ignorant of each other's position, which the First Consul was alone acquainted with; he alone could introduce harmony into their movements; he alone could make their efforts respectively conduce to the same object.

"The fate of the battle was decided by Kellerman's bold charge; had it, however, been made previously to General Desaix's attack, in all probability it would have had a quite different result. Kellerman appears to have been convinced of it, since he allowed the Austrian column to cross our field of battle and extend its front beyond that of the troops we had still in line without making the least attempt to impede its progress. The reason of Kellerman's not charging it sooner was that it was too serious a movement, and the consequences of failure would have been irretrievable: that charge, therefore, could only enter into a general combination of plans, to which he was necessarily a stranger" (Memoirs of the Duke of Rovigo, tome i. pp. 218-280).]—

M. Delaforet, the Postmaster-general, sometimes transacted business with the First Consul. The nature of this secret business may easily be guessed at.

—[When. M. Delaforet was replaced soon after this by Lavalette, Napoleon ordered the discontinuance of the practice followed until then of allowing letters to be opened by subordinate officials. This right was restricted, as in England, to the Minister. However bad this practice, it was limited, not extended, in his reign. See Mineval, tome iii. pp. 60-62, and Lavalette, tome ii. p. 10.]—

On the occasion of one of their interviews the First Consul saw a letter from Kellerman to Lasalle, which contained the following passage: "Would you believe, my friend, that Bonaparte has not made me a general of division though I have just placed the crown on his head?" The letter was sealed again and sent to its address; but Bonaparte never forgot its contents.

Whether Kellerman did or did not give the crown of France to the First Consul, it is very certain that on the evening of the battle of Marengo he gave him a supper, of which his famishing staff and the rest of us partook. This was no inconsiderable service in the destitute condition in which we were. We thought ourselves exceeding fortunate in profiting by the precaution of Kellerman, who had procured provisions from one of those pious retreats which are always well supplied, and which soldiers are very glad to fall in with when campaigning. It was the convent del Bosco which on this occasion was laid under contribution; and in return

for the abundance of good provisions and wine with which they supplied the commander of the heavy cavalry the holy fathers were allowed a guard to protect them against pillage and the other disastrous concomitants of war.

After supper was over the First Consul dictated to me the bulletin of the battle. When we were alone I said to him, "General, here is a fine victory! You recollect what you said the other day about the pleasure with which you would return to France after striking a grand blow in Italy; surely you must be satisfied now?"—"Yes, Bourrienne, I am satisfied. —But Desaix! . . . Ah, what a triumph would this have been if I could have embraced him to-night on the field of battle!" As he uttered these words I saw that Bonaparte was on the point of shedding tears, so sincere and profound was his grief for the death of Desaix. He certainly never loved, esteemed, or regretted any man so much.

The death of Desaix has been variously related, and I need not now state that the words attributed to him in the bulletin were imaginary. Neither did he die in the arms of his aide de camp, Lebrun, as I wrote from the dictation of the First Consul. The following facts are more correct, or at all events more probable:—the death of Desaix was not perceived at the moment it took place. He fell without saying a word, at a little distance from Lefebvre-Desnouettes. A sergeant of battalion of the 9th brigade light infantry, commanded by Barrois, seeing him extended on the ground, asked permission to pick up his cloak. It was found

to be perforated behind; and this circumstance leaves it doubtful whether Desaix was killed by some unlucky inadvertency, while advancing at the head of his troops, or by the enemy when turning towards his men to encourage them. However, the event was so instantaneous, the disorder so complete, and the change of fortune so sudden, that it is not surprising there should be no positive account of the circumstances which attended his death.

Early next morning the Prince of Liechtenstein came from General Melas with negotiations to the First Consul. The propositions of the General did not suit Bonaparte, and he declared to the Prince that the army shut up in Alessandria should evacuate freely, and with the honours of war; but on those conditions, which are well known, and by which Italy was to be fully restored to the French domination. That day were repaired the faults of Scherer, whose inertness and imbecility had paralysed everything, and who had fled, and been constantly beaten, from the Adriatic to Mont Cenis. The Prince of Liechtenstein begged to return to render an account of his mission to General Melas. He came back in the evening, and made many observations on the hard nature of the conditions. "Sir," replied the First Consul, in a tone of marked impatience, "carry my final determination to your General, and return quickly. It is irrevocable! Know that I am as well acquainted with your position as you are yourselves. I did not begin to learn the art of war yesterday. You are blocked up in Alessandria; you have many sick and wounded; you are in want of provisions

and medicines. I occupy the whole of your rear. Your finest troops are among the killed and wounded. I might insist on harder conditions; my position would warrant me in so doing; but I moderate my demands in consideration of the gray hairs of your General, whom I respect."

This reply was delivered with considerable dignity and energy. I showed the Prince out, and he said to me, "These conditions are very hard, especially that of giving up Genoa, which surrendered to us only a fortnight ago, after so long a siege." It is a curious fact that the Emperor of Austria received intelligence of the capitulation and restitution of Genoa at the same time.

When the First Consul returned to Milan he made Savary and Rapp his aides de camp. They had previously served in the same rank under Desaix. The First Consul was at first not much disposed to take them, alleging that he had aides de camp enough. But his respect for the choice of Desaix, added to a little solicitation on my part, soon removed every obstacle. These two officers served him to the last hour of his political career with unfailing zeal and fidelity.

I have seen nothing in the Memoirs of the Due de Rovigo (Savary) about my having had anything to do with his admission to the honour. I can probably tell the reason why one of the two aides de camp has risen higher than the other. Rapp had an Alsatian frankness which always injured him.

CHAPTER II

1800.

Suspension of hostilities—Letter to the Consuls—
Second Occupation of Milan—Bonaparte and Massena
—Public acclamations and the voice of Josephine—
Stray recollections—Organization of Piedmont—Sabres of
honour—Rewards to the army of the Rhine—Pretended
army of reserve—General Zach—Anniversary of the
14th of July—Monument to Desaix—Desaix and Foy
—Bonaparte's speech in the Temple of Mars—Arrival
of the Consular Guard—The bones of marshal Turenne
— Lucien's successful speech—Letter from Lucien to
Joseph Bonaparte— The First Consul's return to Paris—
Accidents on the road— Difficulty of gaining lasting fame
—Assassination of Kleber— Situation of the terrace on
which Kleber was stabbed—Odious rumours —Arrival of a
courier—A night scene—Bonaparte's distress on perusing
the despatches from Egypt.

What little time, and how few events sometimes suffice to
change the destiny of nations! We left Milan on the 13th of
June, Marengo on the 14th, and on the 15th Italy was ours! A
suspension of hostilities between the French and Austrian armies
was the immediate result of a single battle; and by virtue of a
convention, concluded between Berthier and Melas, we resumed
possession of all the fortified places of any importance, with

the exception of Mantua. As soon as this convention was signed Bonaparte dictated to me at Torre di Galifolo the following letter to his colleagues:

The day after the battle of Marengo, CITIZENS CONSULS, General Melas transmitted a message to our advance posts requesting permission to send General Skal to me. During the day the convention, of which I send you a copy, was drawn up, and at night it was signed by Generals Berthier and Melas. I hope the French people will be satisfied with the conduct, of their army. (Signed) Bonaparte

The only thing worthy of remark in this letter would be the concluding sentence, in which the First Consul still affected to acknowledge the sovereignty of the people, were it not that the words "Citizens Consuls" were evidently foisted in with a particular design. The battle was gained; and even in a trifling matter like this it was necessary that the two, other Consuls should feel that they were not so much the colleagues as the subordinates of the First Consul.

We returned to Milan, and our second occupation of that, city was marked by continued acclamations wherever the First Consul showed himself. At Milan the First Consul now saw Massena for the first time since our departure for Egypt. Bonaparte lavished upon, him the highest praises, but not higher than he deserved, for his admirable, defence of Genoa. He named him his successor in the command of the army of Italy.

Moreau was on the Rhine, and therefore none but the conqueror of Zurich could properly have succeeded the First Consul in that command. The great blow was struck; but there might still occur an emergency requiring the presence of a skillful experienced general, well acquainted with the country. And besides, we could not be perfectly at ease, until it was ascertained what conditions would be adhered to by the Cabinet of Vienna, which was then entirely under the influence of the Cabinet of London. After our return from the battle the popular joy was general and heartfelt not only among the higher and middle ranks of society, but in all classes; and the affection evinced from all quarters to the First Consul was unfeigned. In what a tone of sincerity did he say to me one day, when returning from the parade, "Bourrienne, do you hear the acclamations still resounding? That noise is as sweet to me as the sound of Josephine's voice. How happy and proud I am to be loved by such a people!"

During our stay at Milan Bonaparte had arranged a new government for Piedmont; he had ever since cherished the wish to unite that rich and fertile country to the French territory because some Piedmontese provinces had been possessed by Louis XIV. That monarch was the only king whom the First Consul really admired. "If," said he one day, "Louis XIV. had not been born a king, he would have been a great man. But he did not know mankind; he could not know them, for he never knew misfortune." He admired the resolution of the old King, who would rather bury himself under the ruins of the

monarchy than submit to degrading conditions, after having commanded the sovereigns of Europe. I recollect that Bonaparte was extremely pleased to see in the reports which he ordered to be made that in Casal, and in the valleys of Pignerol, Latour, and Luzerne, there still existed many traces of the period when those countries belonged to France; and that the French language was yet preserved there. He already began to identify himself with the past; and abusing the old kings of France was not the way to conciliate his favour.

The First Consul appointed for the government of Piedmont a Council which, as may naturally be imagined; he composed of those Piedmontese who were the declared partisans of France. He stated as the grounds of this arrangement that it was to give to Piedmont a new proof of the affection and attachment of the French people. He afterwards appointed General. Dupont President of the Council, with the title of Minister-Extraordinary of the French government. I will here mention a secret step taken by Bonaparte towards the overthrowing of the Republic. In making the first draught of General Dupont's appointment I had mechanically written, "Minister-Extraordinary of the French Republic."—"No! no!" said Bonaparte, "not of the Republic; say of the Government."

On his return to Paris the First Consul gave almost incredible proofs of his activity. The day after his arrival he promulgated a great number of decrees, and afterwards allotted the rewards to his soldiers. He appointed Kellerman General of division which,

on every principle of justice, he ought to have done on the field of battle. He distributed sabres of honour, with the following inscription, highly complimentary to himself:—

"Battle of Maringo,—[spelt for some time, I do not know why, as, Maringo—Bourrienne]— commanded in person by the First Consul. —Given by the Government of the Republic to General Lannes."

Similar sabres were presented to Generals Victor, Watrin, Gardanne, and Murat; and sabres of less value to other officers: and also muskets and drumsticks of honour to the soldiers and drummers who had distinguished themselves at Marengo, or in the army of the Rhine; for Bonaparte took care that the officers and men who had fought under Moreau should be included among those to whom the national rewards were presented. He even had a medal struck to perpetuate the memory of the entry of the French army into Munich. It is worthy of remark that while official fabrications and exaggerated details of facts were published respecting Marengo and the short campaign of Italy, by a feigned modesty the victorious army of Marengo received the unambitious title of 'Army of Reserve'. By this artifice the honour of the Constitution was saved. The First Consul had not violated it. If he had marched to the field, and staked everything on a chance it was merely accidentally, for he commanded only an "Army of Reserve," which nevertheless he had greeted with the title of Grand Army before he entered upon the campaign. It is scarcely conceivable that Bonaparte, possessing as he did

an extraordinary mind, should have descended to such pitiful artifices.

—[Thiers (tome. vi., p. 70) says the title *Grande Armee* was first given by Napoleon to the force prepared in 1805 for the campaign against Austria. The Constitution forbade the First Consul to command the armies in person. Hence the title, "Army of Reserve," gives to the force which fought Marengo.]—

Even foreigners and prisoners were objects of Bonaparte's designing intentions. I recollect one evening his saying to me; "Bourrienne, write to the Minister of War, and tell him to select a fine brace of pistols, of the Versailles manufacture, and send them, in my name, to General Zach. He dined with me to-day, and highly praised our manufacture of arms. I should like to give him a token of remembrance; besides,—the matter will be talked of at Vienna, and may perhaps do good!"

As soon as the news of the battle of Marengo reached Paris Lucien Bonaparte, Minister of the Interior, ordered preparations for the festival, fixed for the 14th of July, in commemoration of the first Federation. This festival and that of the 1st Vendemiaire were the only ones preserved by the Consular Government. Indeed, in those memorable days, when the Revolution appeared in its fairest point of view, France had never known such joy as that to which the battle of Marengo gave rise. Still, amidst all this popular transport there was a feeling of regret. The fame of Desaix, his heroic character, his death, the words attributed to

him and believed to be true, caused mourning to be mingled with joy. It was agreed to open a subscription for erecting a national monument to his memory. A reflection naturally arises here upon the difference between the period referred to and the present time. France has endowed with nearly a million the children of one of her greatest orators and most eloquent defenders of public liberty, yet, for the monument to the memory of Desaix scarcely 20,000 francs were subscribed. Does not this form a singular contrast with the patriotic munificence displayed at the death of General Foy? The pitiful monument to Desaix, on the Place Dauphins, sufficiently attests the want of spirit on the part of the subscribers. Bonaparte, who was much dissatisfied with it, gave the name of Desaix to a new quay, the first stone of which was laid with great solemnity on the 14th of July.

On that day the crowd was immense in the Champ-de-Mars and in the Temple of Mars, the name which at that the Church of the Invalides still preserved. Lucien delivered a speech on the encouraging prospects of France, and Lannes made an appropriate address on presenting to the Government the flags taken at Marengo. Two more followed; one from an aide de camp of Massena, and the other from an aide de camp of Lecourbe; and after the distribution of some medals the First Consul then delivered the following address:—

CITIZENS! SOLDIERS!—The flags presented to the Government, in the presence of the people of this immense capital, attest at once the genius of the Commanders-in-

Chief Moreau, Massena, and Berthier; the military talents of the generals, their lieutenants; and bravery of the French soldiers.

On your return to the camp tell your comrades that for the 1st Vendemiaire, when we shall celebrate the anniversary of the Republic, the French people expect either peace or, if the enemy obstinately refuse it, other flags, the fruit of fresh victories.

After this harangue of the First Consul, in which he addressed to the military in the name of the people, and ascribed to Berthier the glory of Marengo, a hymn was chanted, the words of which were written by M. de Fontanes and the music composed by Mehul. But what was most remarkable in this fete was neither the poetry, music, nor even the panegyrical eloquence of Lucien, — it was the arrival at the Champ-de-Mars, after the ceremony at the Invalides, of the Consular Guard returning from Marengo. I was at a window of the Ecole-Militaire, and I can never forget the commotion, almost electrical, which made the air resound with cries of enthusiasm at their appearance. These soldiers did not defile before the First Consul in fine uniforms as at a review. Leaving the field of battle when the firing ceased, they had crossed Lombardy, Piedmont, Mont Cenis, Savoy, and France in the space of twenty-nine days. They appeared worn by the fatigue of a long journey, with faces browned by the summer sun of Italy, and with their arms and clothing showing the effects of desperate struggles. Do you wish to have an idea of their appearance? You will find a perfect type in the first grenadier put by Gerard at one

side of his picture of the battle of Austerlitz.

At the time of this fete, that is to say, in the middle of the month of July, the First Consul could not have imagined that the moderate conditions he had proposed after the victory would not be accepted by Austria. In the hope, therefore, of a peace which could not but be considered probable, he, for the first time since the establishment of the Consular Government, convoked the deputies of the departments, and appointed their time of assembling in Paris for the 1st Vendemiaire, a day which formed the close of one remarkable century and marked the commencement of another.

The remains of Marshal Turenne; to which Louis XIV. had awarded the honours of annihilation by giving them a place among the royal tombs in the vaults of St. Denis, had been torn from their grave at the time of the sacrilegious violation of the tombs. His bones, mingled indiscriminately with others, had long lain in obscurity in a garret of the College of Medicine when M. Lenoir collected and restored them to the ancient tomb of Turenne in the Mussee des Petits Augustins. Bonaparte-resolved to enshrine these relics in that sculptured marble with which the glory of Turenne could so well dispense. This was however, intended as a connecting link between the past days of France and the future to which he looked forward. He thought that the sentiments inspired by the solemn honours rendered to the memory of Turenne would dispose the deputies of the departments to receive with greater enthusiasm the pacific

communications he hoped to be able to make.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.