

A JAUNT INTO CORSICA.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE BY A. CASTAIGNE.



A TYPE.

IT was in the month of May that I landed at Bastia, in the island of Corsica, and found myself at once confronted by reminders of Napoleon. On my way to the hotel we passed the Promenade St. Nicholas, and in the

The old town with the citadel rises above the more modern quarter, which lies near the harbor.

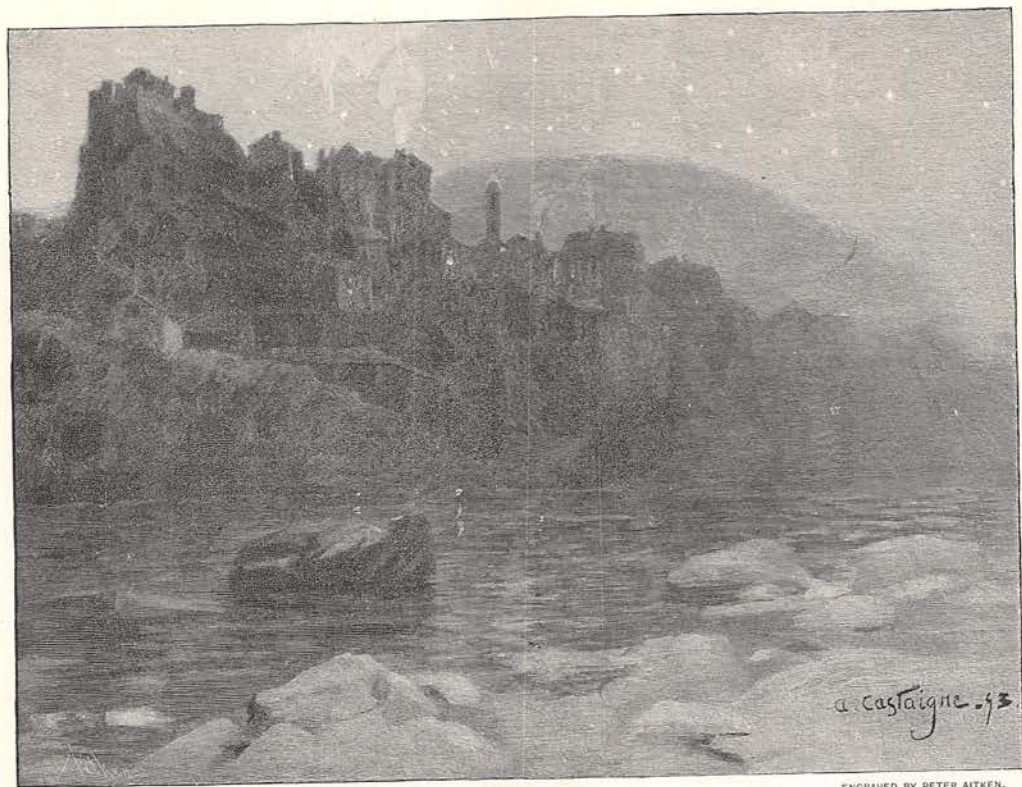
I had given orders for the porter to waken me at five, as the train left for Ajaccio at six. I awoke about five, but as no porter appeared, I dressed myself, and went down-stairs to find him asleep, and everything locked up. I roused him, settled my bill, and started out to find the railway-station, walking by the marble statue of Napoleon, which I photographed. The guide-books have much to say about the late rising of foreigners, but this does not apply to the common people, for no matter how early I have arisen when abroad, I have always found the streets astir. On this occasion, in the Promenade St. Nicholas, the seats were filled with the residents of the town, who were smoking and chatting as though they had been there all night. I hired a Corsican to carry my luggage to the station, which we reached after passing through some hilly back streets, and, on arriving there, found it still closed. Nearly all the railway-stations of Europe have a clock prominently hung on the platform,

center of it noticed a white marble statue of Napoleon as First Consul. It stands facing the sea, with Elba in full view, the towering mountains of which look over upon Corsica. I never realized before how near Elba is to Corsica.

Bastia, the busiest commercial place in Corsica, contains nearly 21,000 inhabitants, and was the capital of the island down to 1811, when at the request of "Madame Mère," the mother of Napoleon, the emperor removed the seat of government to Ajaccio. Bastia is over five hundred years old, and is defended by a strong castle, or bastion, which gave rise to the name.



SUNRISE IN THE CORSICAN MOUNTAINS.



CORTE.

ENGRAVED BY PETER AITKEN.

and when I saw the clock at this station nearly an hour slower than mine, I thought it was not going. It took me some time to learn that Corsica, being a French province, is governed by French time, which is three quarters of an hour slower than Italian. As this dawned upon me, I understood why I had not been called by the porter, and why the railway-station had not yet opened its doors.

On presenting myself at the ticket-office window, later, I laid down my Italian bank-notes and asked for a ticket to Corte, when, to my dismay, I learned that Italian paper-money would not pass in Corsica. Here was a dilemma that I had not anticipated, for all my money was Italian. I showed the agent the entire contents of my pocket-books, and explained with English words, poor Italian, and violent gesticulations, that it was all I had, and that I must go on the train. He told me I must go to the bank, and have my money changed. As the train would start at six o'clock, and it was then nearly that hour, I looked upon this advice as a miserable joke. Before starting for Corsica, I was particular to consult my "Baedeker," which informed me that Italian money was good in Corsica; but it did not say that said money must be in gold or silver, and as "rag" money is almost universally used in

Italy, I did not think of exchanging my paper money for hard money. I wandered about meditating what to do, and finally consulted my conversation-book, in which I found a sentence which I thought fitted my case,—which read "I will pay you for your trouble,"—and which I repeated to the ticket-agent. He sent a man out the back door, who wrote upon a piece of paper that if I would allow him to discount my money fifty per cent, he would sell me a ticket. I eagerly clutched at the proposition, and took a ticket for Corte in this expensive manner. The cars and locomotives were tiny, and the passengers primitive. The road rapidly penetrated the island, and we passed through a number of tunnels, one of them a long one, and by little stations that indulged in such names as Chichio, Furi-ani, Biguglia, Borgo, and Casamozza.

Arrived at Corte, a town on the Tavignano, of five thousand inhabitants, one of the first objects I noticed was the lofty citadel which commands the place, which, in the wars of former centuries, rendered the town a keenly contested point. In Paoli's time Corte was the central point of his democratic government. I visited his study in the Palazzo di Corte, and was shown the window shutters, lined with cork for additional precaution, and walked through



A CORSICAN GIRL OF THE PRESENT TIME.

the council chambers. In the Place Paoli, the principal square, stands a bronze statue of Pasquale Paoli himself.

Here it was necessary to leave the cars for the diligence, and I therefore booked at the railway-station for a first-class ticket in a crazy-looking, dilapidated stage.

How can I describe that never-to-be-forgotten romantic ride across the mountains of Corsica? The conductor blew his horn, the driver thrashed his horses with his merciless, long-lashed whip, and the boy driving the lead horse pounded his weak-looking steed, and our heavy-laden diligence moved off, leaving the gaping crowd looking after us. As the roads in Corsica

are in the same perfect condition that European roads generally are, we moved up the mountain at a good pace.

The mountains of the island are very steep, so that our rise was rapid, and we were not long in reaching a great height, from which a magnificent panorama was enjoyed. I beheld the greater part of the island: to the north, the Capo Corso; to the west, Porto, Sagona, and Ajaccio. To the east, the blue Mediterranean was plainly visible, dotted with the islands of Monte Cristo, Pianosa, Capraja, and Elba, and farther away was the mainland of Italy. The entire island resembled a vast rocky relief-map, its principal mountain-chains, with



ENGRAVED BY CHARLES STATE.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF NAPOLEON I., FROM THE KEEPER'S GARDEN.

their rivers and valleys, being distinctly recognizable. To the right of us, on the lofty summits of Monte Rotondo, were fields of snow and ice, with the greenest of verdure close to the snow. At the side of the road, for miles, were little brooks, and on the edges of these brooks were washerwomen, who cast inquiring glances upon us as we whirled by.

After going about half the distance between Corte and Vizzavona, the evidences of the construction of the intermediate sections of the railroad became apparent. The laborers on the excavations for the bridges and in the heavy cuts were many of them women, young girls, and boys, and all, including the men, carried the dirt and stone out in baskets on their heads. By this slow, toilsome method is all this work done, and it appeared to me that the work would be interminable, but I was told that the contractors were under heavy bonds to complete the road in the time contracted for, and that it would certainly be accomplished.

In passing through the quaint villages, among them Serraggio, Lugo, and S. Pietro di Ve-

naco, I was struck by the costumes of the villagers. Nearly all of the peasant men and women of Corsica that I saw were clad in the most somber manner. The men wore dark brown or black corduroy or velveteen suits, with heavy hobnail boots, and black broad-brimmed sombreros. Not satisfied, apparently, with this heavy coat and trousers, each wore a heavy vest of the same material. Around the waist each wore a broad red sash with ends hanging down at the side, which set off the black or brown suit. The women were dressed mostly in black from head to foot, with black shawls on their heads, and a pretty face was very rare among them. They will not compare with the Italians for beauty of person.

The horse is the beast of burden commonly used in Corsica, and but few mules or donkeys are seen, which appears strange when we know that Sardinia supplies so many of these little animals to Italy. One wonders that they are not more extensively used in Corsica.

At Vizzavona I again paid double fare with my Italian paper-money, and went on my way relieved that even that was accepted. The scenery at this point is of the grandest character, with Monte d'Oro on the north and Monte Renoso on the south, each about 8000 feet high, and capped with

a snowy mantle. We entered a long tunnel under the Pass of Vizzavona (or La Foce), nearly 4000 feet high, and on emerging from the tunnel found ourselves in the valley of the Gravone, near Bocognano. Our tiny train sped on through Carbuccia, Mazzana, and Caldaniccia, and soon came to the well-cultivated plain of Campodoloro, passing splendid stretches of forest, which clad the slopes and presented many beautiful views.

Just at nightfall we reached Ajaccio, the capital of the island. It is most beautifully situated on an extensive bay, but instead of being



A DOOR-STEP, AJACCIO.



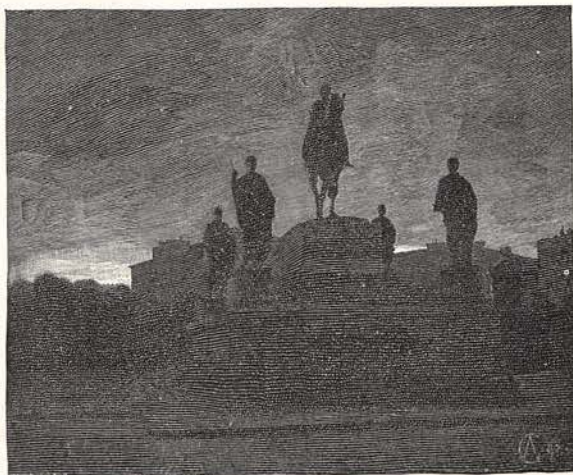
ON THE ROOFS, AJACCIO.

hilly, the town is built upon a plain, and the streets are laid out with considerable regularity, and are of good width. The background of the town is formed by imposing mountains, which are often covered with snow and ice until late in the summer. The inhabitants number nearly twenty thousand, and the streets present a modern, Parisian air. The large hotels were closed for the winter season, so I went rather unwillingly to the Hôtel de France. It was kept by a bright-looking Corsican woman, who was in charge, while her husband officiated in the kitchen, and was only seen occasionally. Her son had just returned from Germany, with a fine education; but with all their varied talents, not one of them could articulate a word of English. By this time I began to long for some one to speak with in my mother tongue, and was greatly gratified when they brought from the dining-room the head-waiter, a young German who informed me in very fair English that he had lived in London as a waiter. By special arrangement with my landlady the German head-waiter was detailed to accompany me on a number of my tramps. As he had been in Corsica only about eight months, he naturally could not give me much information as to localities, and at his suggestion we added to our party the chief cook, a native-born Corsican, who was well versed in the history of the town.

One morning early, with camera in hand, I wended my way through the streets to the Place Letizia. I was much surprised to find that Place Letizia was a short, narrow street not over eight or ten feet wide. A short

distance up this narrow way stands the four-story, yellowish gray house which was the birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte. I did not wonder, as I stood before the house, that it was difficult to take a good picture of it, because it is impossible to get far enough away from it. Opposite the house is a small park or garden, to one side of which is attached the dwelling in which lives the concierge who has charge of the celebrated house. He permitted me to go up to his garret window to get a view, looking out upon the house from that direction. Standing in front of the house, I observed an old crone seated at a third-story window of a house at the back of the little old yard, and holding up a franc in my fingers to her, and touching my camera, I caused her to understand that if she would allow me to go up to her room to get a photograph of the house, I would give her a franc for the privilege. She smiled her assent, and the little daughter of the concierge escorted me around by a rear way, up-stairs, to her room.

Later, I entered the birthplace and early home of the greatest personage of modern times, and ascended the stairs to the second floor. I involuntarily removed my hat as I was ushered into the room, where, before me, stood the writing-desk used by Napoleon. I passed through the ball-room, now called the conversation-room, where, standing against the wall, was the card-table with checker-board at which Napoleon used to play. In his mother's room stood the frame of a plain, painted bedstead, without slats or bedding, upon which Napoleon's mother slept, and in the corner of the room was a plain, narrow settee, or couch, covered with inexpensive woolen material, upon which the child Napoleon was unexpectedly born; for it will be remembered that his mother was



ENGRAVED BY PETER AITKEN.

THE STATUES IN THE PLACE BONAPARTE, AJACCIO.



IN THE OLD QUARTER OF AJACCIO.

taken ill at the cathedral, and was hastily removed to her home upon this couch, and the child was born before the mother could be removed to her bed.

In a small room in the back part of the house Napoleon slept when a boy, and the same simple bedstead stands there to-day that he occupied for a number of years, but no bedding is now upon it. In the fireplace are the same old andirons which were then in use, and on the bureau stood a little mirror in which he had gazed when arranging his toilet.

The upper rooms of the house had been occupied by Princess Marianna, who died a few weeks before my arrival. She was the widow of Louis Lucien, who was the son of Lucien Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon. The house

belongs to the ex-empress Eugénie, to whom it was willed by Napoleon III. No other person will hereafter be allowed to occupy it, and it will henceforth be preserved intact, as a relic of the greatest member of the Bonaparte family.

The general air of the house is gloomy, owing to its unfurnished appearance. The wood and tile floors are bare; there is not a curtain at the windows, and some of the rooms are entirely empty. A few pictures are hung upon the walls, among them some photographs of the Arenenberg château in Switzerland, the home of Queen Hortense, which afterward became the property of her son, Napoleon III. I also noticed a little pen-and-ink sketch made by the ill-fated Prince Imperial. In the ball-room



ONE WHO SAW NAPOLEON.

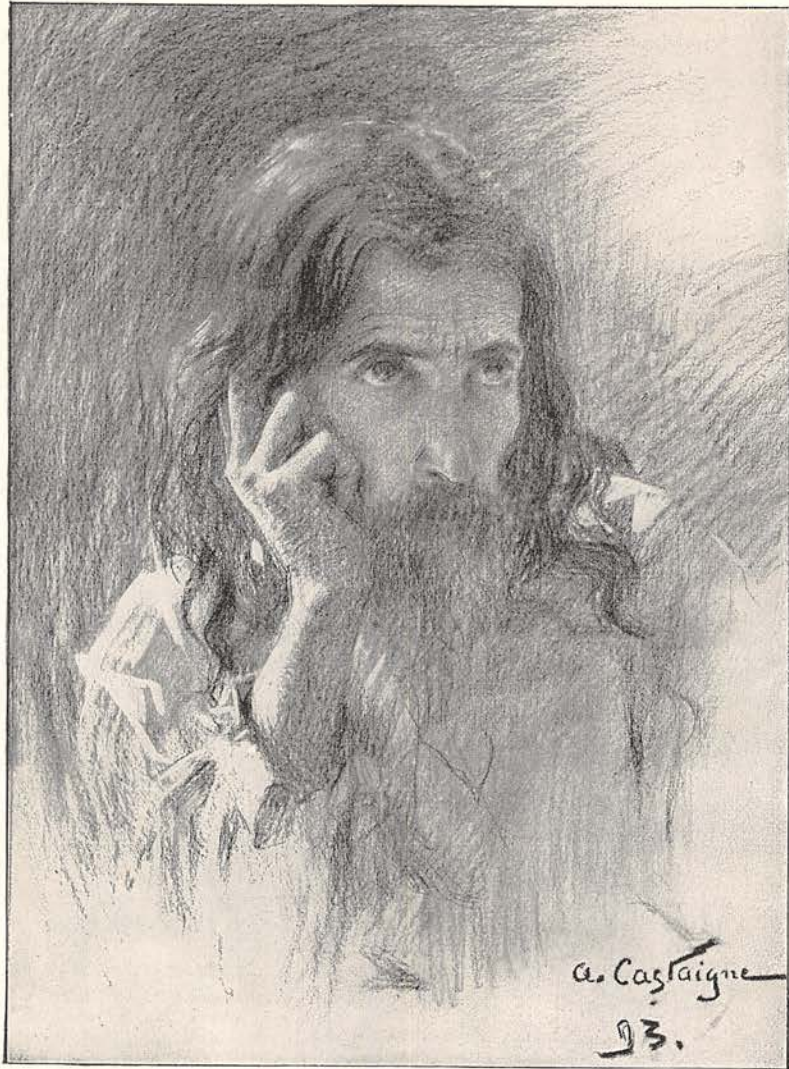
are a number of sconces hanging high upon the walls.

There are so few visitors to this house that the concierge has not been spoiled by them, and I soon found that one could do pretty much as one pleased in the way of taking photographs of the various rooms and their contents, and I lost no time in availing myself of the opportunity.

Not far from the Place Letizia is found a

neat little park filled with every variety of tropical plants, and adorned with marble fountains, with carved lions, from the mouths of which water was flowing. Surmounting the group is a marble statue of Napoleon as first consul. The statue does not possess any great merit, and is only another evidence of the prominence of the Bonaparte family in the place.

Continuing my walk, on each side of which



A CORSICAN PATRIOT OF THE OLD DAYS.

stood a row of large, healthy palm-trees, I reached the Place Bonaparte, where I found a group of statues, the duplicate of which does not exist. In the center is a bronze equestrian statue of Napoleon clad as a Roman emperor, and, standing on four pedestals, at each corner of a large base, are figures of his four brothers, Joseph, Lucien, Louis, and Jerome, clad as Roman senators.

On Sunday morning I visited the hôtel de ville located near the market-place, which is devoted almost exclusively to a collection of relics relating to the Bonaparte family. Upon the wall was a full-length portrait of Charles Bonaparte, the father of Napoleon, clad in scarlet coat and fine lace, and near him his son Joseph, in his robes as King of Spain. Over the mantel-

piece was the portrait of his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, in the brilliant gown of a cardinal, while here and there upon the walls were numerous pictures of Napoleon's mother, and of various other members of the Bonaparte family. In one corner, standing upon the floor, was an ugly life-size marble statue of Jerome Bonaparte as King of Württemberg, presented by himself to his native town, and on many pedestals were bronze and marble busts of "Madame Mère," the little King of Rome, and the Prince Imperial, none of which I had ever before seen. Upon marble tables were several clocks belonging to the family, and on one of the tables was the bronze mask of Napoleon, taken immediately after death, by the order of the Abbé Vignali, who was sent by Cardinal Fesch to

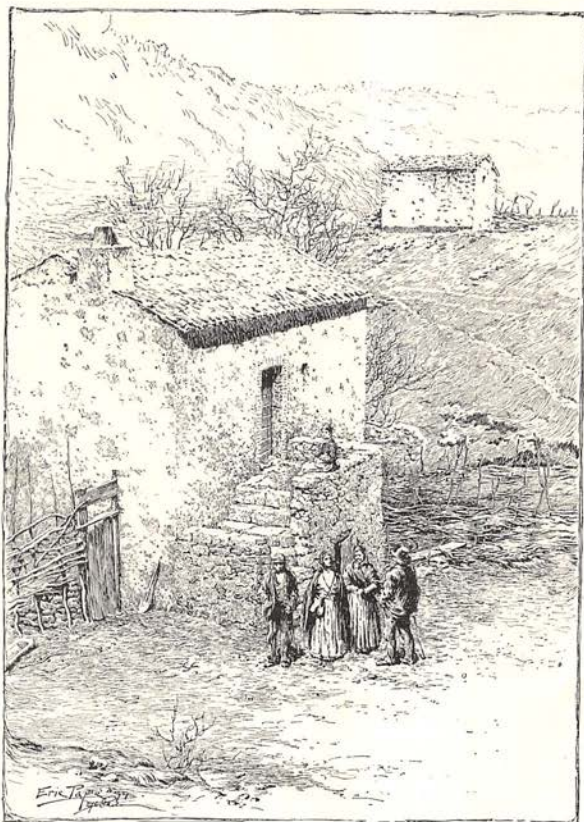
St. Helena to administer the last sacred rites to the dying emperor. Scattered about the room were the remains of the finest furniture from the house of Cardinal Fesch, among which the chairs were especially showy.

As I wended my way down the Rue Fesch, a dirty narrow street filled mostly with shops, I found the gray building called Chapelle Fesch, built to contain the remains of the mother of Napoleon, of Cardinal Fesch, and of other members of the Bonaparte family. On entering, I found myself in a little church fitted up with seats, all of them completely covered with black cloth, which had not been removed since the recent death of Princess Marianna. A woman in charge of the church took a light, and escorted me to the crypt under the church, to see the tombs. By the light of one poor candle in the hands of my guide, I perceived that the tombs were sealed with blocks of black marble, and all

a large collection of pictures, a library of thirty thousand volumes, and a collection of Corsican minerals, which were bequeathed to the town by the cardinal. In the courtyard stands an uninteresting bronze statue of Cardinal Fesch, which was placed there by the town since his death.

The cathedral in Ajaccio, where Napoleon was baptized, is a plain, unimposing, dingy edifice. There is no inscription in or about the cathedral referring to Napoleon, and I was compelled to be satisfied with the possession of a rare lithograph copy of his birth and baptism from the register of the cathedral.

Not far from the cathedral, overlooking the bay, stand the fortifications of Ajaccio, surrounded by a large moat, and garrisoned by French troops. All this work was done under the charge of Napoleon, when he was a young lieutenant engaged in the service of General



DRAWN BY ERIC PAPE.

A MOUNTAIN HOME IN CORSICA.

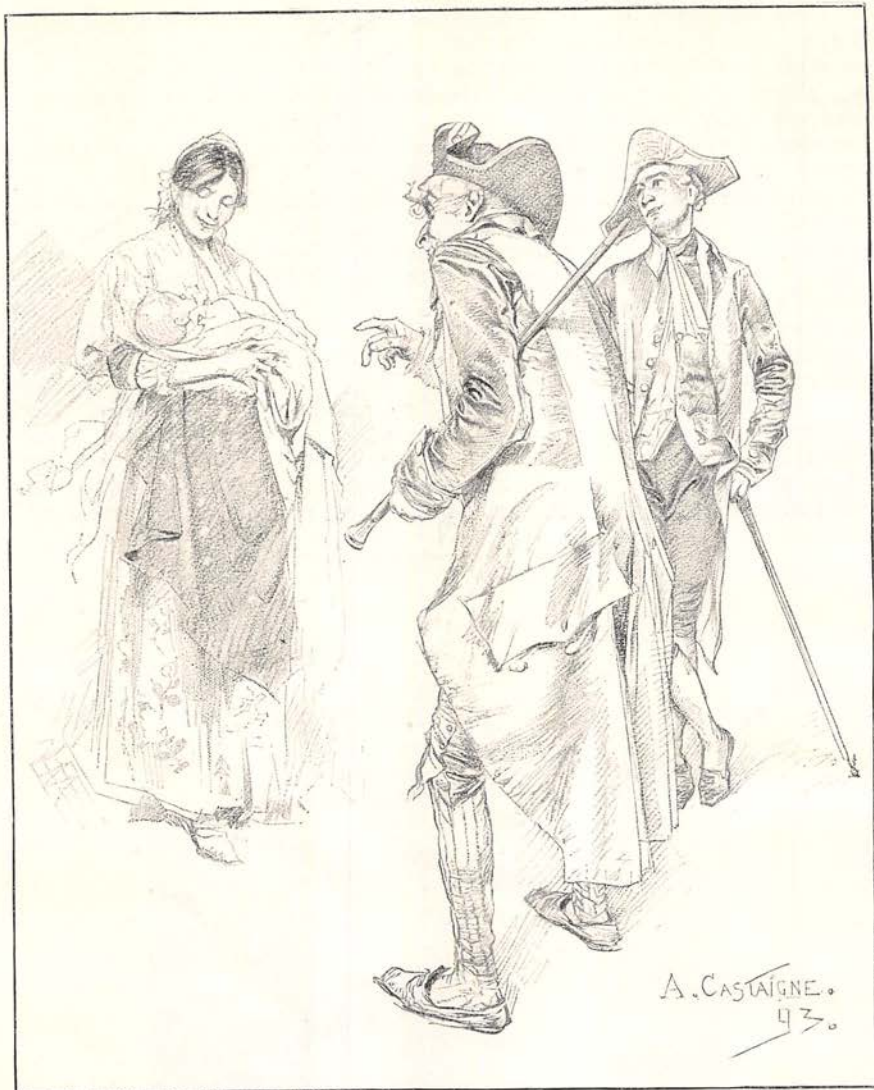
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

that was cut upon the slab containing the remains of Napoleon's mother was the simple inscription, "Letizia Bonaparte, Mater Regum" (mother of kings).

Adjoining the Chapelle Fesch is the Collège Fesch, founded by Cardinal Fesch, containing

Paoli, at the time when Corsica was striving with Italy for her independence.

I drove one day with the English consul through the streets of the town out into the suburbs, where, just beyond the built-up portions, we found Napoleon's grotto, whither he



AN ARTIST'S FANCIES OF NAPOLEON: IN AJACCIO IN 1769.

was wont to retire and meditate when a boy. It is one of the most enticing places about Ajaccio, and one does not wonder that Napoleon loved to go there.

We continued our drive out into the country until we reached a house standing well back from the road, with beautiful grounds and filled with flowers of every description. It was unnecessary to be told, upon seeing the eagles along the front edge of the roof, that this in some manner was connected with the history of Napoleon. This place was the home of Madame Letizia Bonaparte after Napoleon became great, and here she spent much of her time. The property is now owned by Count and Countess Bocciochi, the grandson of Eliza, one of the sisters of Napoleon. As the house

stands upon an elevation, it affords a good view of the surrounding country and the adjoining town of Ajaccio.

One must not think, however, that the Bonaparte family is all that there is to interest the tourist in Ajaccio, for the town itself, with its curious shops, makes the time pass very rapidly. In looking in at the shop-windows, I observed many stilettos and daggers of a form found only in Corsica. These daggers are manufactured in the most elaborate styles, with jeweled handles, and some of them are very expensive. The blades bear various suggestive mottos, such as "Vendetta," "Mort," and a sentence which, translated into English, reads, "Death to our foes." These knives are temptingly exposed for sale in the majority of

the stores of the place, and I was repeatedly urged by the shopkeepers to purchase one to take home with me. They are also manufactured in the form of miniature breastpins of gold and silver, with tiny red coral and onyx handles. This brings to mind the much-talked-of vendetta, which has existed for centuries in the island, and, notwithstanding the restraining and softening effects of advancing civilization, still exists.

Spring of Solario, commanding charming views of the town, the harbor, the gulf, and the mountains. On the way we passed the Jardin Peraldi, where splendid mandarin and other oranges are grown. The road on the north side of the bay passing the Hospice Eugénie, although destitute of shade, also affords a charming walk.

But my time was up, and I was unwillingly obliged to take my departure, and accordingly purchased a second-class ticket, which was



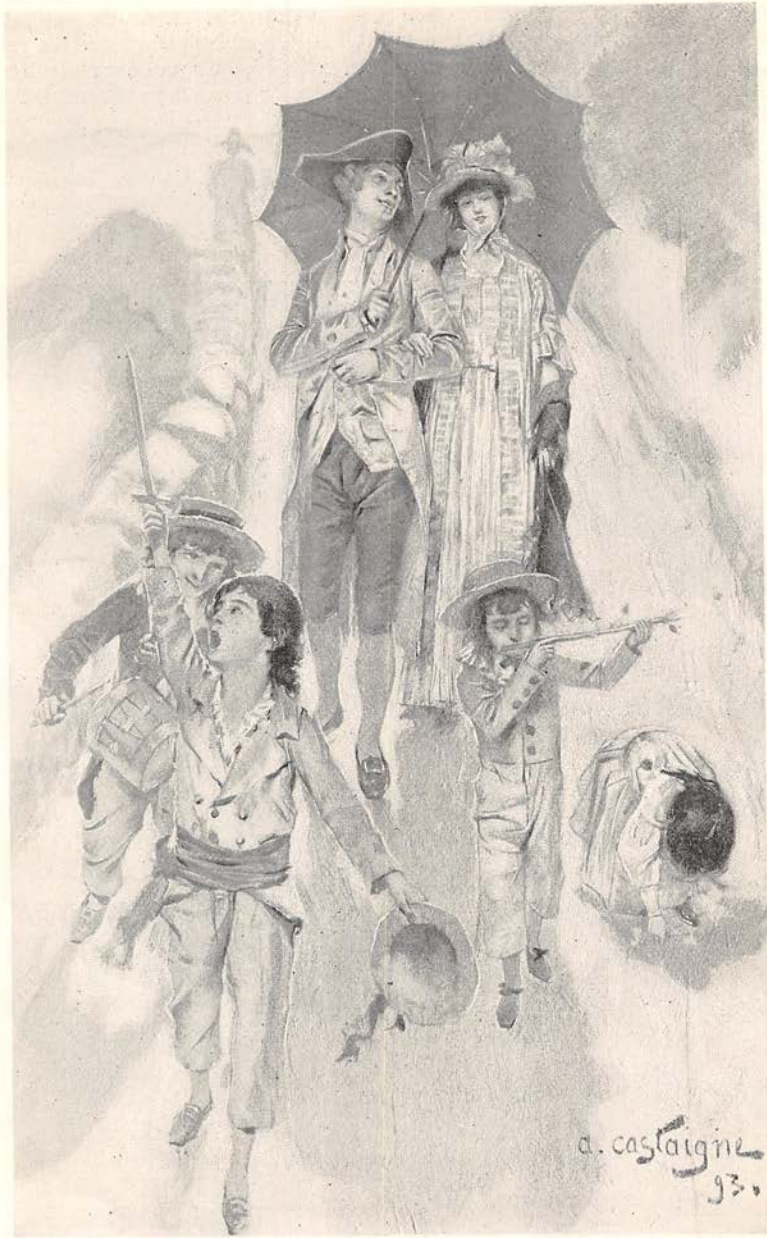
AN ARTIST'S FANCIES OF NAPOLEON: IN THE GROTTA.

A visit to Ajaccio would not be complete without going to the market-place and observing the curious-looking peasants with their little stock of fruit and vegetables displayed for sale. Such luscious strawberries, bright, red cherries, such peas, potatoes, onions, and radishes, I did not find anywhere else. After the small wild strawberries which are everywhere used in Italy, these Corsican berries were unusually attractive and appetizing.

One of the pleasantest walks in Ajaccio is afforded by the prolongation of Cours Grandval, which crosses the Place Casone and gradually ascends the olive-clad slopes to the

good enough, for I found scarcely a passenger in the first-class railway compartments in Corsica.

In due time we reached Vizzavona, and I secured my seat with the driver before leaving the train, and our diligence, with the three horses and the much-abused lead horse, was soon on its way through the valley of the Vecchió, an affluent of the Tavignano. After leaving Vivario, a pleasant mountain village, our course lay along a chain of mountains, the vast height to which they rise within a comparatively small space imparting a wild and imposing character to the scenery.



AN ARTIST'S FANCIES OF NAPOLEON: PLAYING AT WAR.

Nine tenths of the area of the island is uncultivated, while the heights for the most part are clothed with magnificent forests. The soft air was laden with spicy, aromatic odors of a rich flora. As our poor horses started down the mountain, the driver would put on the brake, and they would gallop at full speed over the roads, which are never dusty, and are made of granite almost as white as chalk and as smooth as the best road in any city park. We turned

corners in the road so sharply as almost to dislodge me from my seat, and I held my breath many times, thinking that the diligence would certainly be overturned. At one time, for nearly half an hour, did we see-saw down one of these mountains, and it seemed as though the village was coming up to us, with the steeple and the tile roof of a little Catholic church approaching nearer and nearer at every turn. After the customary changes of horses, we reached Corte,



AN ARTIST'S FANCIES OF NAPOLEON: THE FIRST CONQUEST.

where the train was in waiting to carry us to Bastia, which we reached in the evening.

The next morning we were in the harbor of Leghorn. The little boats flocked about us, on one of which I embarked from the ladder on the side of the ship, and soon found my-

self once more upon Italian soil, where, after a perfunctory examination of my luggage in the custom-house, I was permitted to go on my way to my hotel; and my long-expected trip to Corsica and the home of Napoleon was ended.

Charles H. Adams.

AT REST.

SHALL I lie down to sleep, and see no more
 The splendid affluence of earth and sky;
 The proud procession of the stars go by;
 The white moon sway the sea and woo the shore;
 The morning lark to the far heavens soar;
 The nightingale with the soft dusk draw nigh;
 The summer roses bud, and bloom, and die;
 Will life and life's delight for me be o'er?
 Nay! I shall be, in my low, silent home,
 Of all Earth's gracious ministries aware:
 Glad with the gladness of the risen day,
 Or gently sad with sadness of the gloam,
 Yet done with striving and foreclosed of care—
 "At rest—at rest!"—what better thing to say?

Louise Chandler Moulton.